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## Manipuri Sankirtana

E. Nilakanta Singh

### Sankirtana Tradition in Manipur

It is on record that *Kirtana* singing, possibly from Bengal, entered this land as early as the fifteenth century, during the reign of King Kiyamba of Manipur (1467-1508). Perhaps it entered much earlier. The tradition took roots in this artistic soil and flowered in distinctive rhythms and movements in course of time. This fifteenth century *Kirtana* was offered before Lord Vishnu, who was housed in a small temple which still exists in a village called Vishnupur. Very little is known about this type of *Kirtana* singing. But during the reign of a great Manipur king, Garibniwas (1709-1748), who adopted the Ramanandi cult, an old school of *Kirtana* singing, in the style of *Bangdes* or *Ariba Pala*, became popular and is still preserved and practised at the royal palace and some other centres of Manipur. Rajarshi Bhagyachandra introduced a new style of *Kirtana* singing known as *Nata Sankirtana* which found its supreme expression during the reign of King Chandrakirti of Manipur (1850-1886), when the 64 *rasa*-s were presented for the first time in 64 sessions spreading over 32 days. The Manipuri musician, who sings *Kir-*

*Guru Rajnidhi* (centre) in Ariba Pala



*tana*, is called *Nata*. It is a classical term in Sanskrit, signifying a person who knows the four *abhinaya*-s and different types of *Natya*, who is able to merge in the *raga* which he is trying to portray and who appears physically on the stage: a dancer with songs on the lips. As a matter of fact, Manipuri *Nata Sankirtana* represents an extension of *Leela Kirtana* of Thakur Narottamadas of Bengal (sixteenth century), with the application of pure types of *alapa*, *raga*, *tala* etc. and with *Goura-Chandrika*, singing the glories of Sri Krishna Chaitanya to serve almost as a prologue to each *Sankirtana* performance, a tradition which is still continued in the Manipuri *Nata Sankirtana*. The *Nata Kirtana* still ends with *Nityai-Pada*, a few lines in praise of *Nityai*, after traversing a long way for about five hours of *raga* singing mixed with *samchara*-s punctuated by *tala*-s: Tintala, Duital, Rajmel and Ektal (Tanchup and Monkup) in a series, giving also sufficient scope for executing the various movements and *gati*-s called *Cholom* (*Chalan*) which is also a highly stylised movement. The *pada*-*vali*-s of the various Vaishnava poets in old Bengali, Maithili and Brajabuli, including even the compositions of the great Manipuri vocalists, provide the musical text. The appreciative audiences weep and lie prostrate before the musicians as a sign of devotion. There are other waves of Bengali *Kirtana* singing like *Manoharsai*, *Dhop*, with even the classical style of *Dhrupad* entering this area during various epochs of history and still retaining more or less their authenticity. The Bengali *Kirtana* was reborn, so to say, on the artistic soil of Manipur and has been changed almost beyond recognition. It has absorbed the colour of the folk style of singing and assumed a regional texture and complexion in the presentation of the *rasa*-s.

#### Devotional Sentiments (Rasa-Shastra)

The inspiration and teaching of the six scholarly Gosvamins of Vrindavana finally determined the doctrinal trend of Bengal Vaishnavism. They made modern Vrindavana the chief intellectual and religious centre of the sect, where its philosophy, its theology, its ritualism and its *Rasa-Shastra* were created.

#### Manipuri Nata Sankirtana: invocation



Ariba Pala: Preparing for Rajmel

Among these six immediate followers of Sri Krishna Chaitanya, the credit for first systematising its supreme religious emotion, that of Bhakti, belongs to Rupa Gosvamin. His two Sanskrit works (on the Vaishnava *Rasa-Shastra*) namely *Bhakti-Rasamrita-Sindhu* and its supplement, *Ujjala Nilamani* gave a new turn to the old *Rasa* theory of conventional poetics. These two works constitute the Bhakti *Rasa-Shastra* of the Vaishnava faith: a kind of Rhetoric of Bhakti with all its psychology, conceit and imagery. The love of Krishna is conceived as an aspect of psychology; thus a rhetoric of erotic sentiment evolved. The literary *Sahridaya* is replaced by the religious Bhakti. The love of Krishna (*Krishna-rati*) is installed as the dominant feeling (*Sthayi-bhava*) which, through its appropriate Excitants (*Vibhava*-s) as well as Ensuant (*Anubhava*-s) and Auxiliary Feelings (*Vyabhichari-bhava*-s) is raised to a supreme condition in the susceptible mind as the Bhakti *rasa*.

To the orthodox rhetorician, Bhakti is only a *bhava* and not a *rasa*. The question whether Bhakti is *rasa* or *bhava* has been discussed at length by Jagannatha in his *Rasa-Gangadhara*. In the opinion of orthodox rhetoricians, it is *Devadi-Vishaya-Rati* and, therefore, a *bhava* and not a complete *rasa*. Jiva Gosvamin, however, in his *Priti-Samdarbha* remarks that the phrase, *devadi*, means "ordinary gods" and does not apply to the supreme Krishna. Madhusudana Sarasvati is also of the view that Bhakti as a *rasa* is *Svanubhava-Siddhi* and, therefore, incapable of proof.

To the Vaishnavas of the Bengal school, Bhakti is a "literary-erotic emotion transmuted into a deep and ineffable devotional sentiment, which



Manoharsai

is intensely personal and is yet impersonalised into a mental condition of disinterested joy". The attitude is a curious mixture of the literary, the erotic and the religious. There is also the living poetic experience of poets like Jayadeva (with his *Geet-Govindam*) and this also finds expression in vernacular poetry (Vidyapati and Chandidasa). The Hindu *Purana*-s (of which the *Srimadbhagavatam* constituted the fountain source of medieval Vaishnava Bhakti ) provide another source of inspiration. It is natural to see spectators weeping at certain moments of a tragic play. But to watch a devotee shedding tears and lying prostrate as the lines during a *Kirtana* performance describe the exquisitely attired Radha waiting for Lord Krishna is an experience which can be shared by the devotees alone. Here the *rasa* is *Ujjvala* or *Madhura Rasa* centring round Krishna, as the ideal hero, and His *sakhi*-s.

#### Department of Sri Govindajee

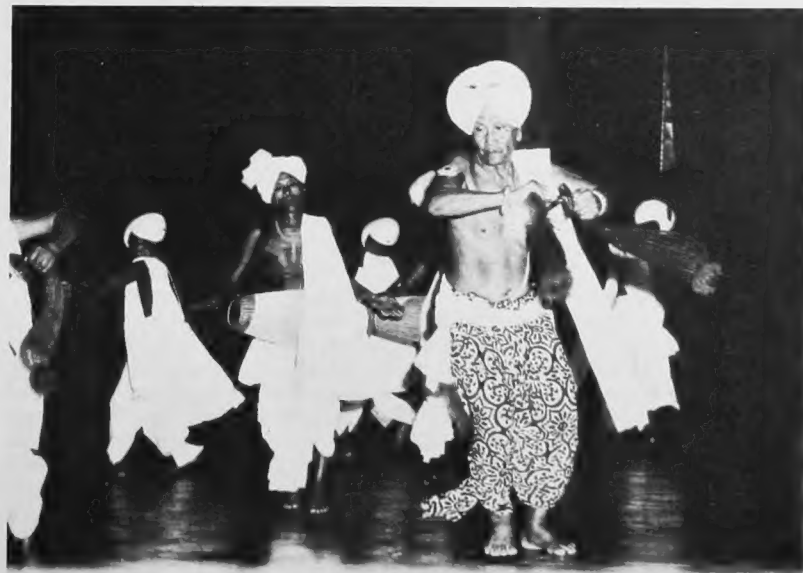
Of the various departments of the royal palace numbering about sixteen, the department of Sri Govindajee (around which the Vaishnavite prayer revolved) constitutes even now a major department. This department has again various sub-divisions for which Manipuri people from four basic functional divisions (called *Pana*-s in Manipur), based primarily on caste, have to contribute in terms of manpower and materials. The sub-divisions or *Loisang*-s are: (a) *Pujari Loisang* (cook) (b) *Duhon Loisang* (assis-

tants to cooks) (c) *Bhandari Loisang* (stores department for the temple) (d) *Kitna Loisang* (derived from *Kirtaniya*, and meant for arranging materials for the Puja) (e) *Moibung Loisang* (conch players) (f) *Garot* (guard—for security purpose during the Puja offered by the king) (g) *Jagoisabi Loisang* (dancers) (h) *Pala Loisang* (for *Kirtana* groups, old and new, divided into four major groups: Palahan, Palanaha, Loipakchaba and Sevak Pala) and (i) *Brahma Sabha* (consisting of learned brahmins regulating the rituals and scholastic principles and forming the final court of appeal in matters religious, with the king as the head). Strictly in conformity with the Vaishnavite *ashtakal* (or eight periods in which a day is divided in the life of Krishna, His friends and *gopi*-s), the various groups have to perform the necessary *arati*-s, and Puja before the three groups of images in the royal temple: Radha and Krishna, Krishna and Balam and Jagannath, Balam and Subhadra (after Puri Jagannath). This institution of the *Loisang*-s of Govindajee took shape in the second half of the eighteenth century during the reign of Rajarshi Bhagyachandra who introduced Ras Leela in Manipur. Luckily, it still survives.

#### Types of Sankirtana

As indicated earlier, Manipuri *Sankirtana* admits of various types or styles of singing which evolved into distinctive patterns in the course of about two hundred years. *Ariba Pala* or *Bangdesh* is the oldest form associated earlier with the Ramanandi cult and later changed into the Vaishnavite

#### Guru Ibungohal Singh doing the Cholom in Nata Sankirtana





prayer of Bengal. *Loipakchaba* and *Sevak Pala*-s come under this group. Then came *Nata Sankirtana*, the highly evolved style of *Kirtana* singing carrying the flavour of this land and its people; it found supreme expression in the presentation of the 64 *rasa*-s in the nineteenth century. There is also *Manoharsai*, another type of singing associated with Thakur Narottamadas of Bengal (sixteenth century A.D.), which came from Bengal but which was enriched by the various dance patterns of this land. The Bengali *Dhop* style of singing along with the *Chaitanya Sampradaya* found its great exponents in the nineteenth century and this is still continued among the *Kirtana* musicians. The *Ras Leela*-s, that is *Kunja Ras* (held on Ashwin Purnima), *Maharas* (on Kartik Purnima), *Vasant Ras* (on Vasant Purnima) and *Gostha Leela* (on Gopalsthami) at the royal palace constitute an extension of the *Sankirtana* tradition. It is indeed a pity that *Ras Leela* finds appreciation and recognition on an international level, whereas the fragrance of its fountain head, the *Sankirtana*, remains confined to the valley of Manipur.

#### Ariba (Bangdesh) Pala

It is on record that *Kirtana* singing took place in Manipur in the fifteenth century during the reign of King Kiyamba of Manipur. But we have so far found no evidence of the distinctive type of this *Kirtana* singing. It might possibly be an earlier form of *Ariba Pala* (called *Bangdesh Pala*) which adorned the royal palace during the reign of King Garibniwas of Manipur (1709-1748). The *Bangdesh* style is supposed to have been introduced by a Bengali *Kirtana* singer who possibly came from Bengal but adopted a Manipuri name. But the style indicates more affinity with the Assamese *Uja Pali* and less with the old style of Bengali *Kirtana*, even though much of the Manipuri folk tunes have been integrated into it. The first inspiration for this style is the Ramanandi cult (with phrases like *Ramo Ramo Govindo*), even though it becomes a prayer of the Manipur Vaishnavas in the eighteenth century and a forerunner of *Nata Kirtana* singing. It is based on the old Indian *raga*-s and *ragini*-s and the *tala*-s admit of many complicated varieties. Unfortunately this is a dying school, patronised only at the Govindajee temple and a few villages, its importance being eclipsed completely by the *Nata Sankirtana* style. Some attempts are being made to revive this tradition, but with little success.

#### Manoharsai Style of Kirtana

*Manoharsai*, a classical form of *Padavali-Kirtana*, is clearly a gift from Bengal. Thakur Narottamadas, the great Vaishnava savant of the sixteenth century, introduced it on the basis of the *Dhruva-prabandha-gana* which he had mastered at Vrindavan. His style of *Kirtana* was, of course, *garanhati* and it was recognised as *Leela* or *Rasa Kirtana*. After him, three other types of *Kirtana*, *Manoharsai*, *Reneti* and *Mandarini* evolved. When this style of *Kirtana* entered Manipur in the nineteenth century, it was popularly known as *Manoharsai*, adopting almost the entire sequence of *Nata Kirtana* singing. A few great names from Bengal are still remembered and some Manipuri gurus also learnt at their feet and even at the feet of the great



Guru Ibungohal Singh in one of the Cholom poses

masters of Bengal. It is purely the *Mahayajna-Padavali Kirtana* which has almost assumed an integrated texture from the four schools of *Padavali-Kirtana* singing in the form of Manipuri *Manoharsai*. It is still a living tradition, with a few old exponents giving their best possible performance. The forerunner of this type of *Padavali-Kirtana* is *Krishna Kirtana* of Vadu Chandidas (West Bengal) and Kavi Vidyapati (Mithila) which paved the way for the *Nama Kirtana* of Shri Chaitanya (fifteenth century). Attempts are being made to present the themes in Manipuri.

#### Dhop type of Kirtana or the Chaitanya Sampradaya

In the opinion of Swami Prajnanananda, the *Dhop* type of *Kirtana* evolved with the admixture of *Padavali-Kirtana* and the *Panchali* or *Yatra Gana*. The *Dhop Kirtana* of Bengal entered Manipur in the early part of the nineteenth century, soon after its introduction into Bengal. The theme of the *Dhop Kirtana* of Bengal was composed mainly of the sportive play of Sri Krishna. It was a comparatively light piece. But when this style came into contact with the genius of the Manipuri musicians it was transformed into a serious type of *Kirtana*, which embodied all the major themes from the life of Sri Chaitanya as recorded in *Chaitanya-Charitamrita* of Krishnadas Kaviraj such as *Sanaton Sanga*, *Ramananda Sanga*, *Haridas Nirjan* etc. It then became known as the popular type of *Kirtana* termed *Chaitanya Sampradaya* or the school of Chaitanya. It is believed that when the *Dhop Kirtana* musicians rise to dance, they become part of the *Chaitanya Sampradaya*. This is still a living tradition, even though its popularity has been considerably eclipsed by the *Nata Kirtana* style of singing.

Pride of place however, must go to the *Nata Kirtana* style of singing which was introduced during the reign of Rajarshi Bhagyachandra (1763-1798). The great masters and scholars of that period composed and sang the *padavali* strictly after the Bhagavata tradition and other major Vaishnavite texts and also based the composition on the traditional *raga-s* and *ragini-s* of the classical tradition. Modern research has discovered several regional overtones in the structure of particular *raga-s* and *ragini-s*. The Manipuris consider the *Nata Kirtana* singing style their own and it is clearly a form of collective prayer, a *mahayajna*, lasting for about five hours at a stretch with a great deal of ritual, movement and rhythmic pattern, strictly after the Vaishnavite faith. *Nata Kirtana* is a composite version of music, dance and *tala*: a *sangeet* in the true sense of the term. It is also *Drishya Kavya* (a poem made visible).

A brief analysis of the preliminary portion of the *Nata Sankirtana* at the various temples will make the point clear. There are usually sixteen artistes forming a circle in the *mandop*: the *Abhineta* (called *Isheihanba* in Manipuri), three of his assistants, an associate of the *Abhineta* (called *Dahar*), his nine assistants, and two players on the Manipuri *Mridanga* (which is called the *Pung*). The entire group is called the *pala*. The *mandop* has for its centre a plantain leaf with a piece of cloth as the seat (*Asana*) on it and other puja offerings like a lamp, paan and fruit. This is called *mandali puja* since five of the Vaishnava saints (Sri Krishna Chaitanya, Nityainanda, Advaita, Gadadhar and Srivasa) are supposed to be seated there and worshipped by the devotees.

According to the Vaishnavite text, the *Bhakti Ratnakara*, the *Khola* (*Mridanga*) and *Kartala* constitute the wealth of Sri Chaitanya and both are to be worshipped. Following this tradition, the sixteen sets of *Kartala-s* (*Ghana Vadya-s*) and the two *Khola-s* are worshipped with lamp, tilak and incense by all the artistes, who almost play the role of the priests of a *yajna*. Clothes are distributed to the artistes by the performers of the *yajna*. This is the *adhivasa* stage of the *Sankirtana Yajna*. The president of the assembly (called *Mandop mapu* in Manipuri) then makes the announcement, *Valaha Premse Kaho Shri Radhakrishna Bhakta Prabhu Nityai Chaitanya Advaita Kahata Santa Sadho Madhuras Vani Hare Hare*. When this recitation reaches the stage *Chaitanya*, the *Mridanga* players strike the *bol*, *Ten Ten Tat Ta Tang*, which is known as the beginning of the major *raga* of the *Mridanga*. The *Mridanga raga* is followed by the *raga* of the particular song which starts with *Ta-ri ta na na*. This is the *alapa* portion of the introductory *raga* chosen by the *Isheihanba*. Before this *alapa* stage, the *Mridanga raga* will continue with a recitation from the *Isheihanba*: *Krishna Priti Ananda Hari Bole* to which all the remaining *nartaka-s* respond with *Hare Hare*. This is followed by a series of *Mridanga bol-s* along with the striking sound of the *Kartala-s* known as the *samchara* of the *Mridanga*. Out of various *samchara-s* (numbering more than thirty) usually it is the *Kartik samchara* which is chosen at this stage. When this finishes, the *Isheihanba* starts the *Sabha Vandana* (salutation to the audience), then the *Guru Vandana* and returns

to his original *raga* which should deal with a Chaitanya theme known as *Goura-chandra*. This is just the introductory portion of a full-length *Nata Sankirtana* to which the *rasika-s* respond with tears. They lie prostrate before the artistes with cries of *bhalo* as a mark of deep appreciation.

After the exciting climax of *Rajmala*, there is scope for the *Dahara* and the other artistes to execute a few exquisite movements known as *Cholom* (derived from Sanskrit *Chalanam*). These are highly complicated, graceful and vigorous. They constitute the *Tandava* portion of classical Manipuri dance and various *gati-s* (gaits) of the movements of birds, snakes, and animals are performed with considerable artistry. The players on the *Mridanga* also reveal a little of their mastery over *tala-s* and rhythmic patterns all of which simply overwhelms the audience. From among the hundred *tala-s* mentioned in the texts and even used by the old masters, about forty are still used by the gurus. Every great *Mridanga* guru makes it a point to compose a few *tala-s*, called *tala prabhandha-s*, set to the accompaniment of a particular *padavali* text. For example, the Brahma *tala* admits of a few set compositions and the particular *tala* is afterwards known by the first lines of the *pada*: for instance *Nritanti Bipine* or *Dokha Goura*. As a matter of fact, all these set *tala-s* are presented occasionally when the *Tala Phangnaba* (Festival of *Tala-s*) is arranged at the various temples. Quite unlike some of the other traditions, the Manipuri *tala* has introductory *raga-s* and *samchara-s* (corresponding to *samchara bhava-s*) which are fixed compositions by great masters.

#### Dhrumel Kirtana

This is a unique type of *Nata Sankirtana*. It has fourteen *Mridanga* players and the entire sequence of *Nata Kirtana* is followed. The accent here is on the complicated *tala-s* known as *samchara-s* which number fourteen and are dedicated to the fourteen groups of Bengal Vaishnavism. The first (*Chaitanya Samchara*) is followed by the thirteen remaining *samchara-s* (performed by the other thirteen drummers) and dedicated respectively to Nityainanda, Advaita, Gadadhar, Srivasa, Dwadas Gopal (twelve *gopal-s*), *Ashta Mahanta* (eight *sadhus*), six *goswamin-s* (of Vrindavan), sixty-four *mahanta-s*, *Goura Bhakta Vrinda*, *Sat Sampradaya* (seven schools), fourteen *Mridanga-s*, all the *bhakta-s* and lastly *Srimad Radha Govinda*. Thus the *Dhrumel* (possibly derived from the Sanskrit term, *Dhruva molaka*) is a highly stylised, ritualised pattern of *yajna* which involves rigorous training, expertise and patience. It admits of four types: *Maha Dhrumel*, *Goura Dhrumel* (composed during the reign of King Bhagyachandra and Nara Singh respectively), *Nityai Dhrumel* and *Lairema Dhrumel* (composed during the reign of King Chandrakirti).

#### Future of Nata Sankirtana

It will now be seen that the *Nata Sankirtana* of Manipuri was born out of the great piety, scholarship and artistic genius of the Manipuri Vaishnavas. It flourished under the patronage of the royal courts and was developed by the great gurus and scholars who dedicated their lives to the enrichment of this tradition. The great masters are now dead and gone. It will not be pos-

Trần Văn Khê

sible to revive this tradition in all its glory. There are signs that this tradition now runs the risk of being cheapened, commercialised and vulgarised. The most that can be done today is to preserve its flavour with archival documentation (through slides, film, tape, photography and notation) so that the future generations can discover with admiration and pride what their forefathers achieved and derive inspiration from their creations. Under the circumstances even this would be no small consolation.

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In the west, the performer is an indispensable intermediary for transmitting the message of a creative musician, known as the composer, to a listener or a public which receives it in silence and without any participation.

Formerly in Asia, the performer was usually also a creator. When there is creation at the time of performance, it is known as improvisation. Let us put it this way: the performer in Asia was often an improviser. Even if he were interpreting only a piece composed by his predecessors, he added a little of himself to it. The performer did not convey a message, but expressed it; he spoke to a listener who responded by sighing, by nodding his head, by exclaiming, or who even participated (as in the case of the songs *a dao* and the traditional theatre of Vietnam) in the musical performance with the drum of praise, the *trông châu*. These stereotyped rhythmic patterns were used with discernment by an informed and expert participating listener, who punctuated musical phrases in this manner and thus indicated his satisfaction or disapproval. The musical performance was a creation or a re-creation with which the audience was more or less associated.

In our days socio-economic changes tend to reduce or suppress totally the participation of the audience. The performer sets a limit to his own part in creation, which diminishes in duration, in intensity and in depth. In other cases, this (creative) part is totally absent.

Creativity in musical performances in Asia is not always and everywhere the same. It varies with time and space. Let us consider what the Asian performer was like in the past, how he manages nowadays and let us search for the causes of the reduced role of creation in musical performances in Asia.

*In the past*

The performer was almost always a composer of music. He also invented or himself made musical instruments. The performer was at one and the same time what we today term as a maker of musical instruments and a composer.

In China, the complete *Tong dian* dictionary cites: the mythical sovereign Fu Xi (2852-2737 B.C.) to whom is attributed the creation of the *qin*, a Chinese zither without movable bridges and with five silk strings. The *qin* has seven strings nowadays and the musical composition of *Fu lai* and *Li ben*; Shun (2255-2206 B.C.) who might have invented the panpipe *bai xiao* and composed the piece *Da shao* (*The Great Harmony*), which was so beautiful a work that 1600 years later Confucius himself, having heard it,



remained for three months without a thought for the taste of meat.<sup>1</sup> Confucius (551-479 B.C.), aside from his extremely conservative, even reactionary, ideas on musical creation<sup>2</sup>, played rather well the *qin* (7-stringed zither), the *se* (25-stringed zither), and the *sheng* (mouth organ). The composition of the *Yu lan* (*Ah! the Iris*) for the *qin* is attributed to him.<sup>3</sup>

Closer to our times, King Kasil (6th century) from Kaya (Korea), who had invented the *kayageum* (a Korean zither with 12 strings, like the *zheng*, a Chinese zither with 13 or 16 strings), also performed for pleasure and composed like the court musician U Ruk, who had composed several pieces for this new instrument at the request of King Kasil.<sup>4</sup>

In the Arabian tradition, Zyriab (8th century) made a lute which was lighter than that of his master Ishq al Mawsili and the strings of this instrument were from the catgut of a young lion instead of a lamb. Besides, he was an excellent performer and improviser as is indicated by the interest that Khalif Harun al Rashid showed in him; he had to leave Baghdad to avoid giving offence to his master and he went off to establish schools of music and singing at Kairawan and to become a master of the Andalusian school in Maghreb.<sup>5</sup>

In India, Amir Kushru (14th century) concerned himself with remodelling musical instruments. A new vocal style and the creation of a new *raga* (among others the *raga Yaman Kalyan*) are attributed to him.<sup>6</sup>

Legend has it that in the fifteenth century in the ancient land of Viet, Dinh Lê one day met two immortals, one of whom gave him a piece of *ngôdông* (*firmiana platanifolia*) and the other a sketch of a celestial instrument. Once the instrument was made—a lute, without a bottom, with a long neck and three silk strings—he started to improvise music that even the birds and the fishes loved to listen to. The villagers were attracted by the beautiful sounds of an instrument which was till then wholly unknown. Serenity and joy filled their hearts. The sick were cured. The chief of the district of the Thanh Hoa province had an exceptionally lovely daughter called Hoa (flower). At the age of ten, the young girl was struck dumb. Dinh Lê was sent for with his lute—the *dan day*. As the first notes fell on her ears, the young girl, who was in the middle of eating, put down her bowl of rice, began to strike the measure with two chopsticks and exclaimed, "What beautiful music!" The chief of the district was so overwhelmed by the sight of his daughter being cured of an illness which seemed beyond remedy that he gave her away in marriage to the musician. Dinh Lê composed a song that he played to the accompaniment of the lute on his wedding day.<sup>7</sup>

In these examples, the interpreter of music is shown as making his own instrument and as always composing the music which he performed. We could cite other instances of the creation of music by instrumentalists. Eta Harich Schneider, in his monumental work on the history of Japanese music, has mentioned the names of several princes of the first Heian period (794-897) who were musicians, performers and composers. Here are some of them: Mina moto no Makoto (810-869), seventh son of the Emperor Saga Tenno, was a superb horseman and performed beautifully on the flute,

on the *biwa*, the pear-shaped lute with four strings, on the *koto*, a Japanese zither with thirteen strings and was also the composer of the *Yoyuraku* piece; Oto no Kiyogami, a contemporary of the Emperor Nimmijo (833-850), true master of the Chinese transverse flute, liked to play with the musicians in the imperial department of music and composed several pieces for the *Gagaku* (refined court music) and set several dances in court (*Bugagu*) in collaboration with the great choreographer Owari no Hamanushi; Wanibe no Otamaro (798-865), following the footsteps of his master Kiyogami, taught the flute and composed several pieces for the *Gagaku*.<sup>8</sup>

We had to refer to the names of sovereigns or prince musicians because history as written by the official historians of the ancient rulers of Asia is completely silent on the subject of the musicians of the people. But there must surely have existed folk musicians who were at one and the same time makers of instruments, performers and composers of music, such as we find even now in the countries of Asia and Africa.

In any case, apart from the musicians who formed part of the great music ensembles of the court and who had to play pieces that the musical conductors had already scored or orchestrated, soloists and musicians (both professional or non-professional) often improvised or at least sought to recreate what they interpreted: Performance and creation were intimately linked.

#### At present

The role of creation in performance continues to diminish in a large number of countries in Asia, and has become non-existent in several traditional musical styles in Eastern and South-East Asia.

(1) In Eastern Asia, with the exception of the Vietnamese, the traditional soloists in China, in Korea, in Japan and in Mongolia, do not improvise any longer.

Earlier, in China, the great pieces for soloists were preceded by an improvised prelude known as *Yinzi*. Nowadays the *Yinzi* are rarely to be heard and if some people play them at all, they merely repeat with fidelity what their masters taught them. Ancient improvisations are transcribed in old or modern notation and melody that was formerly improvised has now become a fixed melody reproduced by performers.

The great actors in the musical theatre, *Jung xi* of Peking, could take the liberty of improvising the vocal part (*Qiang*). The bowed lute player (*jinghu*) had to follow the improvised part. The spectators came less to see the spectacle (*kanxi*) and more to listen to the *Ting xi*; they expressed their warm appreciation of these improvised passages by shouting *hao* (*good!*). This was a mark of their satisfaction, an encouragement to the actors. This manner of applauding (like the improvisations themselves) has disappeared in our time.

In Korea, *sanjo* music for the *komungo* (a six-stringed zither), *kayageum* (a twelve-stringed zither) or *taigeum* (the transverse flute) was im-

provided. Nowadays young musicians learn the *sanjo* as a set piece. The *sanjo* can vary from school to school, but the melody of the *sanjo* does not depend any longer on the inspiration of the performers. Only occasionally does one hear timid variations of melodies taught by the masters.

In Japan, the *Rokudan* piece (literally six sections) composed in the seventeenth century by Yatsushashi Kengyo could have been different variations of the same theme. In our days, the traditional players of *koto* interpret it faithfully, all in the same way. The improvisation and the liberty to perform are reduced to their simplest expression. Certain masters have composed new pieces but their compositions remain fixed. The traditional performers are faithful interpreters of melodies composed by ancient or modern masters.

The *jatag*, the twelve-stringed zither of Mongolia, is no longer used as a solo instrument. According to Dr. Vargyas and Madame Hamayon, who have made recordings of traditional music in Mongolia during the last ten years, the *jatag* has become an instrument for accompaniment, playing a fixed melody in unison or in several parts. No musician knows any more how to improvise further on this instrument.

In the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, soloists or those who form part of small ensembles for chamber music improvise even now before they go on to play traditional pieces. This is known as *Rao* in the South, *Dao* (read *Zao*) in the Central region and the North. But this improvised prelude now tends to become shorter and shorter. Sometimes the *Rao*, as improvised by the masters, is repeated with a few small variations, or they usually repeat a melody that was once improvised or one prepared in advance. In Central and North Vietnam, this *Dao* prelude is no longer improvised and the musician is satisfied with performing a fixed melody before the main pieces.

In the music for instrumental ensembles, one observes the same pattern: few or no new creations, and the part of creation in the performance is insignificant. Formerly before performing a *Gagaku* piece and while tuning the instruments, the instrumentalist played or improvised, one after the other, a melody in the "mode" of the piece which was to be presented and he did so in a free rhythm. This was the *netori*, which according to Eta Harich Schneider resembles the *alap* of Indian music.<sup>9</sup> This is to say that the *netori* was really improvised; it was not a stereotyped melody with an immutable order in the entry of the instruments to be played for all the pieces belonging to the same *cho* (mode) or one that the musician could simply omit.

In Korea, each of the musicians who played the *shamane* music, the *sinawi*, improvised in turn. Laying stress on three notes: *mi*, *la*, *do*, in the *kemyonjo* mode, each instrumentalist improvised, backed by the ensemble. This was an example of collective improvisation. Nowadays the order of intervention of each instrument is fixed and the musicians admit that the role of improvisation is minimal.

In China and in Vietnam, the same phenomenon occurs, though in the Vietnamese tradition, the rhythmic or melodic variation is carried out

according to the rules. A drummer in the traditional theatre of the North, the *hat cheo*, learns the rhythmic formulae, those that are real and well set (*chân phuong*), that is basic. He must perform them by adding "trimmings (flowers and leaves)" (*danh hoa la*). But it must be recognised that today the young musicians are often content with variations of formulae or with formulae created by the old masters.

(2) In the countries of South-East Asia, the solo performer constitutes an exception. One sometimes hears a player of the *saw sam sai* (a bowed lute with three strings, from Thailand), a singer who accompanies the *chapey* (a lute with a long neck and two strings, from Cambodia), a player of the *khene* (the mouth organ of Laos), a player of the *saugn* (the Burmese harp), a player of the *rebab* (a bowed lute with two strings, from Malaysia or Indonesia) or a player of the *kudyapi* (a lute, shaped like a boat, with two strings, from the Philippines). But all this is now rather rare.

Above all, we listen to ensembles here: the *piphat* in Thailand, in Laos, and in Burma similar to the *pin peat* in Cambodia which comprises of a double-reed wind instrument, two sets of seventeen gongs placed on a circular cane framework, two xylophones with seventeen bars, two double-headed cylindrical drums, a horizontal drum with two skins, struck with the bare hands, and small cymbals; the *gamelan* from Java, consisting especially of melodic bronze-keyed percussion instruments, instruments that give the nuclear theme, paraphrasing instruments, instruments which give the counter-chant, colotomic instruments which mark the punctuation of the divisions, and agogic instruments which indicate the tempo. The music conductors of the *gamelan* of Java and above all those of the *gong* of Bali continue to create new pieces. But the other musicians only perform whatever their masters have taught them. In the other countries, the performers are satisfied with the traditional repertoire.

It is true that collective improvisation, individual improvisation or variation in an orchestral ensemble are difficult. Each performer has to take into consideration what the others are doing. But it must also be recognised that nowadays the part left to creation is negligible.

(3) In the countries of 'modal' music, in India, in Pakistan, in Nepal, in Sri Lanka, in Iran, in Iraq, and in the Arab states, improvisation is still indispensable in a performance.

A soloist, singer or instrumentalist, in India continues to improvise in the part known as the *alap*. Even when he reaches the *gat* part (a word that most Indian musicians translate as "composition"), he plays the melody of the *gat* twice or thrice and then he goes on to compose variations on this melody, but the spirit of creation always remains alert.

Formerly, in Iran, the masters improvised a lot and often, in course of their improvisation, created new *gusheh*. *Gusheh* are melodic sequences, some of which follow each other in a defined order known as *radif*, to form an *Avâz* or a *Dastgâh* (mode).

The first *gusheh* which introduces the sentiment of a mode is called *dâramâd*. But according to the classic repertoire transcribed by Professor Moussa Ma Aroufi there exist nowadays four *dâramâd*, for the *Dastgâh e Shur* and the *Dastgâh e Tchâharagâh*.<sup>10</sup> This shows that a master created the first *dâramâd* and he himself, or another master, instead of repeating this *gusheh*, improvised or created a second *dâramâd*; then another, the third *dâramâd* etc. . . . all of which were appreciated, accepted and perpetuated by the musicians. But it has been a long time since a master has created a fifth *dâramâd*. Today's musicians learn all the *radif*, the classic repertoire of a master, and include in their performances some melodic or rhythmic variations. There is a certain freedom in the choice of the *gusheh* or in the manner of transition from one *gusheh* to another. Actual improvisation is not excluded. I have heard the late masters, Borumand, Hormozi, Shahnaz, and the young masters, Dr. D. Safvat, M. Payvâr, improvise in private concerts or in exceptional circumstances. In festivals or in radio or television broadcasts, the musicians repeat the classic *gusheh*, adding some variations but they really hesitate to improvise in the true sense of the word.

In the Arab states, the soloists still improvise when they play, especially when they present a *Taqsîm*. I had the good fortune to listen to my friend, Salah el Mahdi of Tunisia, improvising on the oblique flute (*nai*), on the five-stringed lute, on the *ud*, and also when he sang (in Paris, in Corsica and in Brazil); to Mata Mohamed of Libya improvising on the *buzuk*, a lute with a long neck and four strings (in Berlin in 1972); to Munir Bashir of Iraq improvising on his six-stringed *ud* (at Rennes in 1973); and at Baghdad in 1975 where other traditional musicians of Iraq improvised on the *ud*, the *qanoun*, a zither with plucked strings, and the *ney*, an oblique flute.

In the countries of modal music, the performer still improvises. The creativity of the performer is thus developed because that is indispensable. A musician's training embraces not just the art of mastering vocal or instrumental techniques, but also that of improvising, creating and composing.

As we have already seen, apart from the countries of modal music, creativity in musical performance has clearly diminished in Asian musical traditions.

#### *Why has creation in performances diminished?*

In order to be able to create during a performance, the performer has to have inspiration and this depends on the degree of his sensibility, the place, the time of the performance, and on his communication with his audience.

(1) Certain socio-economic and cultural transformations of the twentieth century—multiplication of the mass media, acceleration of the rhythm of life, adoption of western practices in concert halls or theatres—have contributed to a decrease in creativity in music performances.

(2) As the number of transistors sets increases, that of private concerts decreases. People get used to staying at home to listen to records, pre-record-

ed cassettes or radio broadcasts. Creation in live music performances and the active participation of the audience tend to be replaced by passive listening to "canned" music.

(3) The rhythm of modern life has quickened. Each of us is jostled by time. Everyone is rushed. The audience has no longer the patience to listen to the entire presentation of a great musical work. We are now speaking of works of traditional music. How can musicians find the inspiration to improvise as they used to in earlier times? In radio or T.V. broadcasts, the duration of improvised pieces is continually being reduced. In the new conditions of our existence, it is not surprising that in Vietnam the improvised part is reduced in the South to a few musical phrases and in the central region to one or two stereotyped phrases. This (improvised) portion is totally non-existent in China and Japan.

(4) Concert locations, like the behaviour of audiences, have somewhat changed in Asia. Earlier, the musicians were surrounded by their listeners, who, as we have already mentioned, often participated in the performance. The musical performance was a conversation with friends whom one knew, and who appreciated one's abilities and original ideas and who encouraged the performer with sighs, with a nodding of the head, and sometimes with exclamations. This human contact, this stream of sympathy, of understanding, of communion between the performer and the audience favoured musical creation. At present the audience is larger in size and in the main unfamiliar to the performer. It does not dare to demonstrate its enthusiasm and like the western public it listens to the music in silence. The microphone, which amplifies the sound of a weaker instrument for a large theatre, the brilliant glare of the footlights, which illuminate the raised stage (similar to the orator's platform), pose barriers between the performers and the listeners and any contact between them is thus rendered more and more difficult. The musician who improvises has to surmount all those obstacles, to give up the intimate manner for the more oratorical one. He has to try doubly hard to reach an audience which is colder, more distant, more distracted and more rushed than its predecessor.

All this results in limiting creativity in musical performances and especially so if the musician (as it often happens) abides by his "score" (which is written in western notation and considered a sign of progress by those who believe that the era of oral tradition has ended). Collective improvisation is no longer possible in a performance by an ensemble conducted by a conductor, who, instead of playing with the group, is happy beating time as is done in the west.

#### *More the pity!*

Formerly, in Asia, the performer was also a creator: a creator of the instrument, a creator of the music. Whilst listening to an improvisation, the listener could savour the charm of the unexpected, experience the pleasure of witnessing an artistic creation.

Nowadays (with changes in life styles, in behaviour patterns and with technological progress), improvisation, that is creation during the per-

formance itself, has been superceded by a faithful rendering of a musical piece. Its form is frozen and its course strewn with obstacles or with snares, already familiar to the informed listener. The latter admires the performer who knows how to overcome these obstacles and avoid these snares exactly in the way one admires an acrobat. Formerly, a musical performance in Asia was a creation or a re-creation. These days, it tends to become in certain countries a mere demonstration.

Of course, the traditional musician must adapt himself to the contemporary social scene. It is difficult for an instrumentalist to invent his instrument or to prolong his performance beyond certain limits. But adapting to contemporary society does not mean imitating all that is done in Europe or in America and being content with a "good performance". It should not lead him to renounce the spirit of creativity in performance; creativity is, after all, as interesting an element for the performer as it is for the listener. It is the source of continuous revival of tradition, of adaptation of tradition to the evolution of society and life styles, without succumbing to the westernizing of Asian music.

The traditional musicians of Asia will have to choose between the path leading to the permanent creation of a dynamic music, alive and ever-renewing, and that of mere faithful rendering—which merely boils down to the correct reading of static, that is stiff and rather frozen, music. On this choice will perhaps depend the future of musical traditions in Asia.

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## Theatre and Film

Satish Bahadur

*Everything is what it is, and not another thing*

—Joseph Butler: *Fifteen Sermons*

### Introductory: The Problem of Identity

This essay presents a frame of ideas about the nature of Film for a conceptual examination of its relationship with Theatre.

Film is a matter of just the last eighty years. The first silent film was the Lumière Programme of 1895 and sound films came after 1927, while Theatre has been in existence from the very early days of human civilization. When Film was just emerging, Theatre already had a corpus of theory, of texts and traditions which had matured through many historico-cultural cycles of growth e.g. the Greek Theatre, the Sanskrit Theatre, the Elizabethan Theatre. In short, the art of Theatre had an identity of its own. Despite this, the confrontation of Theatre by Film led to much confused thinking about the nature of the two.

Sure enough, Film had certain apparent similarities which made it look like Theatre. For instance, both could show fictional stories of human interaction; both appealed via the eye and the ear; both needed actors, and so on. Because of such similarities there were some who considered Film an extension of Theatre: it could do everything Theatre could do and more; by recording a theatrical performance, Film could make a play reproducible at will for audiences anywhere, anytime. An extreme prediction even made out that Theatre would be entirely absorbed and wiped out of existence by the future development of Film.

None of this, of course, ever happened. Over the last eighty years, Film has co-existed with, not swallowed up, Theatre. The ancient performing art of Theatre has developed into its modern form as a performing art. Also, parallel to this has been the growth of the *new* art of Film, with an identity quite distinct from the art of the Theatre. Despite this, confused arguments about Film and Theatre still continue. This article attempts to locate the sources of such confusion in two areas.

As a recording medium, Film is like a neutral transparency on which anything with a visual and auditory component can be recorded with photographic and phonographic realism. The quality of photographic and phonographic realism gives a film-recording such visual and aural "sameness" to the original that the recording appears like the thing itself. Film has, in fact, been used for making Filmed Theatre, which looks superficially like Theatre itself. A distinction, therefore, needs to be made between Theatre and Filmed



Theatre. This is the core idea of the section, *Theatre and the Recording Function of Film*.

The second section, *The Art of Theatre and the Art of Film*, attempts to discuss the basic differences between the two arts. The Art of Film lies essentially in composing fragments of recorded photographic moving pictures (by the camera), and fragments of recorded sounds of different kinds (by recording machines) and, further, of composing (in editing and in re-recording) these fragments of pictures and sounds in an expressive continuity. The movie camera and the recording machines are the very basic creative tools without which the Art of Film cannot exist. In contrast, the core of the Art of Theatre, and without which it cannot exist, is the live actor performing for an audience. The distinction between the two lies in the fact that Theatre is a performing art whereas Film is *not* a performing art.

#### *Theatre and the Recording Function of Film*

Man has always wanted to preserve a permanent record of facts and events of the transient world. Memory of an event is fickle; making a record of the event is a device to make that memory permanent. Writing of speech sounds and linguistic forms evolved as recording media early in human civilisation, and so also picturing in line and colour; Photography, Cinematography and Phonography developed only in the last 150 years or so.

Writing, like Language itself which it records, is arbitrary and abstract—and, therefore, versatile; its very abstraction, however, prevents the record of a thing, say the written word *tree*, from being like the thing—the beautiful green object in the open. Moreover, its conventions and symbolic rules are confined only to a linguistic group, and have to be learnt. Drawing as a recording medium comes close to the visual shape of the thing. The drawing of a tree is like the visual shape of the tree, but it is still not quite like the tree. Man constantly strove to develop a medium capable of recording an exact *likeness*, a direct, sensuous medium which could record the myriad details of the moving world of sights and sound. In short, it was a search for Film, the medium of photographic and phonographic realism.

Film did come but only through the slow discovery over many centuries of many scientific principles and their application to the machines of cinematography, viz. the movie camera and its counterpart, the film projector, and the machines of phonography, viz. the sound recording system and its counterpart, the sound reproducing system. By their very nature, Photography, Cinematography and Phonography are based on complicated machines and scientific technology.

As experience, photographic realism was something new in human consciousness. The first film ever made, the Lumière Programme was shown in Paris on December 28, 1895, and a newspaper headline the following morning declared: "This is life itself!" Some spectators ran for their lives when the Lumière film showed a railway train rushing towards them. Some

early names of Cinema like Vitagraph, Biograph and Bioscope celebrate the connection of the medium with life, with reality.

These were by no means primitive reactions to photographic realism; even modern audiences are gripped precisely by this property of Cinema. You actually see on the screen a *moving picture* of, say, Manoj Kumar walking in a garden singing a song, but it appears as if Manoj Kumar *himself* is walking in a garden singing a song. Further, you see Manoj Kumar from the viewpoint of the camera, which was in the garden next to Manoj Kumar when the shot was taken. Hence, you not only see Manoj Kumar walking in the garden singing a song but also have the additional feeling that you are *there* in the garden, in the same spot where Manoj Kumar is. They say that to see is to believe. Cinema enables you to see and hear something exactly as it is—on the spot and at the very moment.

The quality of photographic realism of cinema gave rise to the non-fiction genres of films, which instantly distinguish it from the art of Theatre. Films like the documentary, the newsreel, films of travel and of events like pageants and sports and educational and instructional films use the photographic and phonographic realism of cinema to *record* and interpret problems of the social, economic and cultural life around us. Theatre did not have any non-fiction development for the simple reason that Theatre is not a recording medium at all. It is an expressive performing art.

Ironically enough, it was precisely the quality of photographic realism (in the days of the silent film) and of phonographic realism (later, in the days of the sound cinema) which attracted Cinema to Theatre. The logic was as follows. Film was an expensive medium and businessmen who quickly recognized cinema as a medium of mass entertainment were constantly searching for potentially attractive material for the largest possible audiences. Theatre provided ready-made stories, sometimes based on well-known plays written by well-known authors and acted by well-known actors. The film camera (and later the microphone) could record theatrical performance with photographic accuracy; in multiple copies it could be shown to mass audiences, anywhere, anytime. Moreover, Cinema was a struggling newcomer with no pedigree in the hierarchy of the arts; by including within itself the high art of Theatre, Cinema could attempt to improve its cultural status. This is how Filmed Theatre was born, curiously enough in the silent period when the words spoken by the actors could not be heard but had to be *read* in brief titles. With the coming of sound, Filmed Theatre came into its own; today the spectator can see the actor's performance as well as hear the words spoken by him.

They appear very incongruous now, but actually several hundreds of films on plays were made in all countries during the silent period. Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, for instance, was made into a 8-minute silent version and the Bard's famous lines cut down to a few written titles interspersed in the scenes. When Madame Sarah Bernhardt, the great French actress, was invited to the filming of her play *Queen Elizabeth* in 1911, she is reported to have declared with glee: "This is my only chance of immortality!" Madame

Bernhardt was correct in the limited sense that she can be seen with photographic accuracy even today after she is dead and gone but the film failed to preserve her histrionic skill. Madame Bernhardt's enthusiastic response arose out of a failure to appreciate the distinction between Theatre and Filmed Theatre. Theatre is a live performance by actors for an audience present at the time of performance. The actor projects for his audience, which offers him a live response, and this, in turn, energizes the actor's performance. This live projection-response relationship is at the heart of the theatrical experience. When a film makes a photographic and phonographic record of a theatrical performance, the live immediacy of the theatrical experience is missing. Filmed Theatre is only a recording of the theatrical event and, therefore, cannot give any clue to the theatrical experience.

But Filmed Theatre has been extensively attempted in the cinema of almost all the countries of the world. Nearer home, one could mention two examples. Sohrab Modi's *Khoon Ka Khoon* (1935) was a straight filming of Agha Hashar Kashmiri's rendering of *Hamlet* for the Parsi Theatrical Company. The first shot of the film showed the opening of the proscenium curtain accompanied by a whistle and the bang of a cracker, and the play began. The dominant camera composition was the full frontal view of the

Bal Gandharva in *Sadhvi Mirabai*



Laurence Olivier in *Henry V* with Felix Aylmer (as Canterbury)

whole stage, but often the camera could move in to closer angles on the actors. Bal Gandharva's famed *Sadhvi Mirabai* (1936) has also been filmed with the same technique, and with disastrous results. The film (which was directed by Baburao Painter) fails to capture the genius of the actor who cast his spell on an earlier generation of Marathi theatre-goers. In the absence of the live theatrical event, this film record maroons in time a middle-aged impersonator masquerading as a painted, costumed woman. It is almost a parody of Magdulkar's tribute: "There will never be another Bal Gandharva!"

These are, of course, extreme examples of Filmed Theatre in the early history of cinema. Even now Filmed Theatre continues, but with considerable cinematic sophistication. The concept is as follows. The basic thing to be filmed is the play; the author's original lines have to be enacted and spoken by the actors. But the stage is no longer the fixed space behind the proscenium, but rather an extended area with numerous possible locations over which the camera can roam. The camera need not take the ideal spectator viewpoint of the whole stage; it can bring the audience closer to the actor for greater viewing and hearing comfort; the acting can be modified to suit the changed camera position. The entire range of skills of cinema would be brought in for the basic effort of filming of the play. Outstanding examples of such Filmed Theatre are Sir Laurence Olivier's three Shakespeare films *Henry V* (1945), *Hamlet* (1948) and *Richard III* (1954). Three excellent



Wendy Hiller (as Eliza) and Leslie Howard (as Higgins) in *Pygmalion*

instances of filming plays by modern writers are: George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* by Anthony Asquith (1938), Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Elia Kazan (1951), who incidentally also produced it on the New York stage, and Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* by Mike Nichols (1966). Such honest examples of Filmed Theatre partly serve a social and educational function for the mass audience. After all, the recording function of Film is to bring events which occur elsewhere at another time for the benefit of the spectator who is here and now; a newsreel is valuable precisely because it enables you to see right now an event which occurred elsewhere at another time. Likewise, you can see Laurence Olivier on the stage only if you are in London when he is playing and if you are lucky enough to procure a ticket for a performance. Filmed Theatre brings the recording of Laurence Olivier's performance for any spectator anywhere, anytime. Filmed Theatre uses the recording powers of Film in the service of the dissemination of Theatre in a situation which is otherwise impossible since the performing art of Theatre exists only for the duration of the performance, and has no existence after that.

The relationships between the art of Theatre and the art of Film are issues of a different kind altogether.

#### *The Art of Theatre and the Art of Film*

The core techniques of Theatre are connected with the performance of the actor for an audience present at the time of the performance. The core

techniques of Film are connected with the pictorial composition made by the movie camera, the sound compositions made by the microphone and recording machines and the combination of pictorial and sound elements in editing composition and re-recording. Herein lie the main distinctions between the art of Theatre and the art of Film.

Analytically speaking, the actor in Theatre performs two distinct functions: (i) the actor is the concrete incarnation of the *dramatis persona*. Besides, by his mime and verbal acting the actor creates the theatrical event and the space and time in which that event occurs; (ii) the actor projects to the live spectator — as a communication device to bridge the psychological distance caused by the separation of the stage area and the audience area.

Rough and ready examples will illustrate how these two elements of acting actually operate in theatrical performance.

Firstly, there is the creation of the theatrical act by the actor. The curtain goes up to reveal the lighted area of the stage with some properties on it, say a few cardboard cut-outs of trees and the background curtain. Then an actor enters. His face is made-up and he is wearing a robe and a wig. He mimes a limping, tired walk across the stage and takes up a stance of anxious expectation behind a cardboard cut-out of a tree, which suggests that he is waiting for someone who is offstage; then he starts speaking his lines... Let us assume that the created theatrical event indicates that this is the king who has escaped from the enemy; now he is hiding in the forest waiting anxiously for the messenger to bring him news from the battlefield. It needs to be recognised that this event is created by the *presence* of the actor on the stage and his *performance* on the stage. Further, it is through the actor's stance of hiding behind a cut-out that the cut-out "becomes" for us the tree and the space "becomes" the location of the forest. Still further, the actor, by his mime and spoken words, also creates the sense of stretched-out time in which the event is taking place; the limp across the stage area may be made to feel like a long trek through the forest, and not appear as the mere two minutes of chronometric time in which the actor has accomplished the act on the stage. The event, and the space and time in which the event occurs are created by the actor's performance. Suppose the curtain had opened, and no actor had come on the stage. We would have watched the stage properties for, say, four or five minutes, and would have concluded that something had gone wrong with the play. We would have seen the cardboard cut-outs as cut-outs. This means that a play cannot come into being without a live actor on the stage.

Theatre uses many accessories like the proscenium stage, properties, lighting, costumes, make-up, music etc. These are used in some styles of production but not in others, since they are not essential to the form of Theatre itself. Perfectly good theatre, modern as well as old-style, can exist without them. An actor's performance can invest the bare boards of a modern stage with the flexibility of becoming any location — a sea shore, a crowded street or a thick forest. Much of modern theatre is without make-up or cos-

tumes; in the folk theatre one has even heard of the actor who refused to shave off his moustache for a female role and succeeded in playing a perfectly winsome Subhadra! Theatre is, by its very nature, a highly symbolic art. It demands from the spectator a high degree of willing suspension of disbelief; the spectator expects to receive from the symbolic stage area symbolic images of human characters in conflict, but the kingpin of the entire ensemble of Theatre is the symbolic acting of the actor on the stage which determines the level of symbolism of the other elements of the ensemble of the stage presentation.

The second element is projection in stage acting. The actor acts in the stage area while the spectator sits in the auditorium area. The proscenium distinctly separates the two areas; the intimate theatre, whether folk or avant garde, might tend to diffuse this element. Even so, the aesthetic and conceptual distinction is valid. The compositional problem on the stage is that many elements like characters, properties, sets, backdrops, lights, etc. compete for the spectator's attention. Hence, it is necessary to create a focus of attention for every segment of a scene so that the spectator can see the scene in terms of what happens and also receive the *significance* of what is happening on the stage. For instance, in the scene of the defeated king in the forest, the spectator should not only see a physically exhausted king hiding in the forest but it is equally important that the actor pitch his mime and words at a *level* to ensure that the spectator receives the *quality* of danger, fear and anxiety of the king's situation. Even if a character on the stage sits quietly on a chair for two minutes in a scene, he has to project through his acting stance (to the audience) the significance (whatever it might be) of the character sitting quietly in the chair. This projection aspect of acting is not strictly concerned with narrative import. Its function is to seek the level at which the communication of narrative import would be effectively registered by the spectator who is separated from the actor by the psychological distance of being in another space. One of the important things that the director of a play attempts to achieve in rehearsals is to balance out the relative acting projection achieved by different actors in a scene so that its dramatic essence becomes clear to the audience. In performance, the actors continuously keep on making adjustments in relative projection amongst themselves, to the extent that they receive the response signals from the audience. This projection-response relationship is characteristic of all face-to-face communication situations, in inter-personal talking, or public speaking, or a music performance, or on the live stage. Over-projection results in exaggeration and imbalance in performance; under-projection leads to casualness and lack of clarity about what is happening on the stage.

The relationship of the actor with the total ensemble changes drastically when we pass from Theatre to Film. The symbolic nature of Theatre makes the performing actor the central creator of the art work; in Film, the film director is the central creator of the art work, presenting on the screen audio-visual expressive images of various themes conceived in terms of the photographic-phonographic-realistic requirements of the medium. The film director composes the art work through three distinct technical stages:

Firstly, he uses the movie camera to create shots which are recorded fragments of visual images, their expressive quality depending on the way they are composed as *two-dimensional visual design in movement*. The actor may be in front of the camera, but the very process of photography reduces the actor's live performance to an optical element in the visual composition of the shot. Hence the acting registered on the film as a moving optical image depends very much on the director's technical decisions, viz. the position of the camera in relation to the actor, the movement of the camera, the lens used in the camera, the lighting of the shot, the duration of the shot and the way in which the actor is related in the pictorial composition to other elements in the shot like fellow actors and other animate and inanimate objects. And it should be stressed that the effect of these technical decisions of the film director are not optional extras (comparable to the sets, the properties, lighting etc. in the stage composition), but the very devices through which film composition is created. Further, the camera is a neutral machine and any live response to the actor from a live spectator is cut off by the neutral machine. Hence, the compositional devices, described above, are the director's methods of generating feeling in the spectator. The intervention of film camera, therefore, makes very different kinds of demands on the film actor's skills. He has to act in small fragments of acting since the shooting is discontinuous. The actor has always to be aware of the position of the camera for every shot since he has to act relative to the camera position. Moreover, during shooting, instead of live audience response, the actor is subject only to the cold glare of the camera lens and the abrupt gesture of the film director.

Secondly, the film director uses recorded sound of many varieties: the speech of the actor, effect sounds and fragments of music to make a composition of sound elements which would eventually fit the visual composition of shots placed in relation to each other. Thus the film actor does not usually have the same kind of support to his acting skill from his voice that the stage actor invariably has. The film actor has to speak his lines for the recording machine and not for the audience. It is the director who eventually manipulates the recorded speech of the actor in relation to other sounds for the sake of achieving the desired audio-component of the finished film.

Finally, the director arranges the shot fragments and sound fragments in relation to each other in the editing process and the re-recording process which leads to the finished film.

Thus in Film the actor's live acting in front of the camera gets thrice removed from the original through several compositional stages: reduction to an optical element within the shot, the relationship of a shot with the other shots, and finally the modification of the visual image by the addition of the sound component. The event seen in the finished film is not created by the actor's act but by the director's compositional devices at various levels. Similarly, the space in which the event occurs is not created by the actor's act since the event itself might not have taken place at all. In point of fact, there is no space in which the cinematic events exist beyond the pictorial space created in the camera shot for audience perception. Similarly, the time duration of the cinematic event is controlled by the editing of shots.



The actor is important in the cinema because he enacts the *persona* in the story content of the film. However, the compositional devices of the form of Film are independent of the actor and are controlled by the film director. When it is said that Theatre is the actor's medium while Film is the director's medium, we are actually referring to this peculiar relationship of the film actor within the total framework of the devices of cinema. In fact, a film may not even have actors. Documentary film and abstract films are examples of this kind.

Similarly, the use of the camera and the microphone makes projection by the actor unnecessary in film acting, the reason being that any spectator of a film is conceptually looking at a shot from the position of the camera and listening from the position of the microphone. This places the spectator right in the "middle" of the scene, at the conceptual and psychological centre of the drama which is being created by the interaction of the characters. Hence, there is no need to overcome the distance between the audience area and the event area, since there is no such conceptual distance. Projection in film acting is unnecessary because the task of projection has already been taken over by the camera and the sound recording machines, which bring the spectator right in the "middle" of the action. Thus the responsibility of communicating the narrative and the expressive import at the right *level* rests with the director who chooses the focus of attention and its subsequent locus.

These basic distinctions between the two art forms demonstrate how the problem of transforming a play for the screen is qualitatively different from the problem of presenting it on the stage. The author's play-text is the original vision (created through words) of the commanding form of dramatic revelation of human conflict which has eventually to be realised in stage presentation when the author's words are interpreted by the actor in speech and mimetic action. The play is originally conceived for symbolic presentation in Theatre. The task of the theatre director is to discover a style of staging, appropriate to the vision which is inherent in the author's text and to rehearse the actors to realise it in performance.

But adaptation of the play-text for the film screen involves the transformation of something which exists within the symbolic matrix of Theatre into the direct sensuous matrix of the photographic-phonographic realism of Cinema. The recording possibilities of cinema provide an easy way of circumventing this essentially difficult aesthetic-creative problem, and most film makers adopt this easy course. They stage the play for the camera and the microphone and film it, and then, of course, we have the familiar Filmed Theatre, done crudely or with cinematic sophistication. The genuine problem of adaptation is one of identifying the commanding form which exists in the structure of the play, of lifting it from the symbolic matrix of the play, and finding an equivalence of the original form in the medium of cinema. This has rarely been achieved in the entire history of international film making. A few outstanding achievements in the genre are worthy of mention. Akira Kurosawa's *The Throne of Blood* (1956) is a film adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Kurosawa transposes the action from medieval



Toshiro Mifune in *The Throne of Blood*

Scotland to medieval Japan. But he preserves the original dramatic conflict of the play expressing the tragedy of vaulting human ambition. Consistent with the photographic requirements of the film medium, Kurosawa's characters are Samurai personages moving against the background of medieval Japanese castles and landscapes; consistent with the phonographic-realistic requirements of the cinema, these Samurai characters speak harsh, guttural clipped Japanese prose. Shocking though it may appear to purists, the Kurosawa film entirely discards Shakespeare's evocative poetry. But, at the same time, there is the miracle of transformation of the poetry of one medium into the poetry of another medium. The images in Shakespeare (that are meant to be evoked by the mimetic and verbal skills of the actor on the stage) are all there, intact, in the Kurosawa film. But they are transposed into the physically palpable environment where the action takes place: images of violence and serenity, of light and darkness, of blood, of the moods of horses and of nature, of mental confusion and clarity. *The Throne of Blood* is a truly unique adaptation of a play on film: it does not use poetry in the film, as filmed theatre does, but rather achieves a valid equivalence in the poetry of the film. Kurosawa achieves something very similar in his adaptation of Maxim Gorky's *The Lower Depths* (1957), where he maintains Gorky's words in Japanese translation, but treats them cinematically by embedding them in the concrete socio-physical context. The visual shapes of the cramped environment of the ramshackle doss house are used in film composition with such consistency of design that the environment itself achieves the status



Innokenti Smoktunovskii in *Hamlet*

of a persona. Kozintsev's Russian adaptation of *Hamlet* (1964) and *King Lear* (1972) have the same quality of cinematic transformation. In the Indian cinema there has been little experimentation in genuine problems of adaptation of plays to film. Three attempts are promising: Satyadev Dubey's film of Vijay Tendulkar's *Shantata Court Chalu Ahe* (1970), and Mani Kaul's two films, *Ashadh Ka Ek Din* (1972) based on Mohan Rakesh's play and *Ghashiram Kotwal* (1977) which has been rescripted for the screen by the playwright Vijay Tendulkar himself.

As the youngest art in human history, Film has gratefully borrowed values from the older arts, but transformed and absorbed them within the requirements of film form. Drama has contributed to film form the principles of dramatic structure, which are invariably used in composing films of themes displaying human conflict. But it should be recognized that while a stage-play cannot but be dramatic, a film is free to be dramatic or not. What we have just discussed is the possibility of the truly dramatic film which rises above being Filmed Theatre. But a film does not have to be dramatic in quality to justify itself as a film. A film is never free to be other than cinematic. But that raises another problem: *What is it to be cinematic?*

## Chhow Dance of Mayurbhanj

The Tasks Ahead

Sitakant Mahapatra

### Introduction

Since Independence, there has been a flowering of interest in the classical and folk culture of India. This has been, to a large extent, due to the Akademi at the State level and the Central Sangeet Natak Akademi. Attempts have been made to analyse the intricate aspects of these dance forms some of which almost faced extinction at the time of Independence. Various aspects of their idiom, vocabulary, repertoire, gesture, thematic and aesthetic qualities have been studied and attempts have also been made to relate the various dance forms to their folk background and cultural milieu. In short, the perspective in the sphere of dance and music has been to view them as integral expressions of folk culture and its world view. Simultaneously, the different dance forms and folk cultures have also been sought to be viewed as aspects of an all-embracing Indian folk culture whose most significant contribution has been the search for an unifying idiom and symbol in the midst of pervading diversities.

The Chhow dance of Mayurbhanj, however, seems to have been left out of this current rage of cultural efflorescence. Various aspects of the dance, its origin and growth, its themes, the musical accompaniment, the gestures and aesthetic moods of the performances are yet to be studied in detail and related to the relevant aspects of folk culture in the neighbourhood. In the absence of any such detailed investigation, one finds it somewhat difficult to accept a large number of prevailing generalisations on various aspects of the dance. The dance also has not yet been brought into an all-India focus nor has its relationship with similar dance forms been studied in any detail. The Akademis both at the Centre and at the State level have yet to go a long way in helping this dance to survive and grow, not merely by way of financial assistance, but, what is more important, by organising and directing research into different aspects of this dance.

### Origins

When Mayurbhanj Chhow was presented at Calcutta during the Emperor's visit in 1911, *The Englishman*, Calcutta, observed: "The war dance of Oriya Paikas, it is understood, was much admired by their Majesties. The Paikas danced their best and furnished a relief from the monotony of silent processions". *The Statesman* dated 6.1.1912 commented: "The dance drew universal appreciation. The Oriya Paik dance was a great spectacle". A Mayurbhanj Chhow group-dance or *Mela nacha* (as distinguished from solo or *Futnacha*) is always spectacular, vigorous, and characterised by rhythmic fury rising to a crescendo at the end. One of the commonly held viewpoints regarding the origin of Chhow—and one unfortunately held without much significant evidence—emphasises its martial origin and character. It is, for

example, said that the word "Chhow" itself derives from "Chhauni" (military cantonment or camp) and that the basic posture and stance of the dance, its steps and gaits, and the absence of female dancers, all point to its original martial character. The prevalence of non-martial and non-warlike themes derived from the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Purana-s*, the emphasis on the Krishna legend, the large number of folk subjects and the derivation of a wide variety of basic postures and *bhangi-s* from the daily ritual of the ordinary household are sought to be explained (or rather explained away) by the general observation that these items must have entered the Chhow repertoire somewhat later. No attempt is made to explain when, why or how such inter-mixture did take place. The confusion seems to flow primarily from the over-riding emphasis on foot-work (as distinguished from gestures of the hand, *hasta mudra-s*, or facial expressions and movements of the eyes, lips, etc., *abhinaya*,) that characterises Chhow and this is argued as another point in favour of the thesis of its martial origin. It is said that in the formative stages the dancers used to dance with sword or spears etc., and hence the hands and the face did not convey as much of the visual imagery of the dance as the feet did. It is, however, not explained why in most folk dances the feet render the rhythmic fury and vigour of the dance much more competently than the hands and the face. This is not to deny the possibility of Chhow deriving some inspiration from the martial spirit of the local people, but to maintain that it is basically a martial dance and that its marriage with the tribal dance *Amdalia-Jamdalia-Nacha* produced the Chhow form would perhaps be a little too clever. Such a view can be taken seriously only after a more detailed investigation into its origins.

There are some who believe that Chhow is derived from the Oriya word ଗୁରୁ or ଗୁରୁ or ଗୁରୁ meaning the attempt to show off, hypocrisy, pictures or shadow respectively. Now it is almost certain that initially Mayurbhanj Chhow used masks. It was only during the time of the King Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo (around the turn of this century) that masks were discarded. Old records of the Mayurbhanj Estate indicate that elaborate methods were employed to prepare these masks, which were often multi-coloured. The primary colours used were, however, ochre, white, brick-red and black. (It may not be out of place here to mention that the tribal Santals who are justly reputed for their skill in painting their walls use these four colours even today.) These masks must have looked like painted pictures. They also served the purpose of camouflaging the character's real face and gave him the intended stylised look and this was perhaps looked upon as artistic 'hypocrisy'. The dancers did "show off" quite a bit. Etymologically, therefore, it is possible that Chhow was derived from analogous words in the Oriya language.

#### *Links with the Tribal Dance*

The martial origin of Chhow is far from clear. The Mayurbhanj region of north Orissa was not the scene of many battles in historical times and the people who lived in this area were not particularly famous for their martial traditions. There are no documentary or archaeological records which point to any martial tradition in this area. Historians are agreed that

the Kheriyas ruled the northern part of Mayurbhanj in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They were an aboriginal tribe and paid tribute to the Mayurbhanj Raja in honey, *maina* birds, parrots etc. The rule of the Kheriyas was in turn succeeded by that of the Bhuiyans and the Dharuas. Maharaja Jadunath Singh Deo's attempts to obtain an increased annual tribute met with stiff resistance from the Dharuas and he invaded the Bamanghati area in Mayurbhanj district to bring it under his direct control. The Santals and the Kols came to the help of the Mayurbhanj Maharaja at a crucial phase of the battle. This is the historical background to the Mayurbhanj Estate's cordial links with the Santals and the Kols. As a matter of fact, the enlightened rulers of Mayurbhanj have always accepted the integration of the non-tribal Hindus and the tribals as part of their policy. The Santals, the Kols and the Mundas were specifically encouraged to participate in the Hindu festivals, the most important of which was the *Ratha Yatra* at Baripada. The Santals also participated in the festivals related to the worship of Shiva. In the Mayurbhanj village of Badamtalia, a Santal constructed a small Shiva temple by raising donations and a Hindu priest was engaged for the worship of Lord Shiva in this temple. During Shivaratri the people of the region congregate to observe this Hindu festival and the Santals also participate in it in very large numbers.

These facts point to the close integration of the Santals and non-Santals of Mayurbhanj in the patterns of their social and cultural life. The worship of Shiva in a modified form is accepted as a part of the Santali mythology. Maranburu, the highest God of the Santali pantheon, is literally the God of the Great Hills. Occasionally, the enlightened Santals think of Maranburu as another name for Lord Shiva. It is, therefore, probable that the Chhow dance which emerged as a folk dance related to the rituals of Shiva worship imbibed from the very beginning certain elements of the tribal dance. This author has collected the invocation songs of the Santals in the Mayurbhanj area. These songs (known as *Bakhen-s*) have a ritualistic basis and are generally linked to the occasions punctuating the cycle of the agricultural seasons. The text of these invocatory songs has a degree of similarity with the prayers offered to Lord Shiva during the initiation of disciples into the practice of the Chhow dance. The prayers are generally pleas for the welfare of the community. Thematically, many of the Santal dances share some of the traits of the Chhow dances. The *Dantha* dance of the Santals, for example, includes a number of themes from the *Ramayana*, and their parallels are to be found in certain Chhow dances such as the dance number, *Jambab*. A number of Santali dances based on the Krishna legend and incidents taken from the *Ramayana* bear a close resemblance to the folk dance items performed by the villagers of the district and in particular the *Mahanta* community. A systematic analysis of the melodic pattern of the orchestra and the movements of the dance of Chhow will in all probability indicate a number of similarities between these two groups of dances. Many Santali dances are in the nature of rural pantomimes: different kinds of agricultural operations, gestures of greeting, impersonations of different kinds of birds and animals often occur. The Chhow also includes dance imitation of birds and animals (for example, *Jatayu*). Specific items in the Santali dance (*Lagren, Baha, Dahar, Jadur* and *Rinja*) need to be systematically compared with items in the Chhow



A scene from Zambeb

repertoire, with a view to discerning in detail the similarities and differences. The Santals mainly use two types of drums: the *tumduk* with its cylinder of clay and the *tamak* with its hide-covered bowl. While the *tumduk* is played with the hands, the *tamak* is beaten with sticks. The former maintains the rhythm; the latter echoes and adds to the depth of the song. Somewhat similar drums are used in Chhow dance. The use of the mahuri and the flute in Chhow dance is akin to the use of these instruments in Santali dances.

#### Similarities with Ritual and the Folk Tradition

One might reasonably trace the origin of Chhow primarily from the folk dances of the cultural region of North Orissa (in particular, the Mayurbhanj district), with a very large admixture of tribal elements. During its evolution it has acquired a discipline and rigour; and this has doubtless given it, at least in part, the qualities of classical dance. As Kapila Vatsyayan has observed: Mayurbhanj Chhow presents many problems of classification in terms of the categories of Indian dance styles. One may, however, conclude that it is a very interesting and exciting blend of classical, folk and tribal elements with a strong ritualistic content.

The ritualistic and specifically tribal aspects of the dance need to be investigated in much greater detail. The Chhow dance traditionally, as also today, used to be a part of the *Chaitra Parva*. The *Chaitra Parva* which falls in April has the twin aspects of spring's delicate wistfulness and the vibrant energy of the coming summer. It is a time when the *sal* trees are in bloom everywhere. The landscape has bright patches of red and purple (with the *simul*, *kusum* and the *palas* flowering all around) along with the blazing warmth of the copper and brown colours of fallen leaves. The atmosphere is surcharged with the languor of spring gradually merging into the elemental energy of the sun heralding the advent of summer. The local tribals also have their own festivals during this period. The Santals have the *Pata* festival in mid-April. In Mayurbhanj and Singhbhum the *Pata* festival has essential similarities with the *Bhokta* ritual.

Evidently, the word *Bhokta* is linked to the Sanskrit word *Bhakta*. The *Bhokta*-s were hereditary worshippers and belonged neither to the Brahmin or Karan (Kayastha) castes. In fact, they were usually from the lower castes. They used to enjoy rent-free land gifted to them by the kings of Mayurbhanj. After the abolition of the Zamindari system they lost the right and title to the land. In earlier days, the *Bhokta*-s used to roam the streets of the town of Baripada singing hymns in praise of Shiva and praying for the welfare of the king of Mayurbhanj. Today we see them at the end of this journey appearing around midnight on the stage where the Chhow dance is being performed. They are dressed in red-coloured dhotis and enter with great fanfare, burning incense and sprinkling ritually prepared powders into blazing fires (*mashal*-s) which sometimes send up leaping tongues of fire seven to eight feet high. The *Bhokta*-s form different groups, each under a *Pata-Bhokta*. They observe a strict code of conduct and are invested with sacred threads and garlands of *mallika* and *champak*. They also carry canes. During this period their own *gotra*-s are changed to Shiva-*gotra*. They are referred to as *Betra Sanyashi* and *Sutra Sanyashi*.

This ceremony used to be associated with the Uda or the swinging-by-hook festival which has now been declared a criminal act by legislation because of the danger to human lives. It is not confined to the Santals alone; the Mundaris and Oraons of Singhbhum and Sundergarh districts also observe during the month of April the famous *Sarhul* festival. This is the beginning of the hunting excursions of the Mundaris and Oraons. W. G. Archer has rightly compared it to the Christian festival of Easter as the two festivals correspond to "an exaltation in the brilliant weather and the flowering trees and the sense of sprouting life" (*The Blue Grove*, p. 36). The *Chaitra Parva* in Mayurbhanj also used to have a number of ritual aspects. In an article in



the Mayurbhanj Gazetteer (Volume No. 1, No. 3, April, 1932), there is a reference to the *Bhokta* ritual commencing on the seventeenth day of Chaitra; the *Bhokta*-s used to fast (like the Patuas) before the Goddesses. Generally these *Bhokta*-s now sing *bhajan*-s before the Goddesses and Mahadeva during the four days of the ritual, culminating in *Pana Shankranti*. They perform four different *Pata* ceremonies; *Kanta Pata* (walking or rolling on thorns), *Nian Pata* (fire-walking), *Jhula Pata* or *Ugra Tapa* (hanging, head down, on fire) and *Uda Pata* (rotating on a horizontal pole). It is interesting to observe that the *Danda Nata* has its own system of *Bhokta*-s, as also the worship of Shiva and Shakti, and a large number of dance performances which resemble aspects of the Chhow. The mention of *Hakand* in *Danda Nata* is also significant. *Uda Pata* and *Pansi Pata* (jumping from a height) also figure in *Danda Nata*.

The *Danda Nata* and *Danda Puja* of Southern Orissa have similarities with the *Bhokta* ritual. With *Danda* comes the *Jhamu* dance. The worshippers are known as *Dandua* and their presiding deity Shiva is called *Danda*. The entire objective of the *Jhamu* dance and the *Danda Nata* would seem to be the sublimation and control of the body and the sense organs. The *Dandua*-s, as also the *Jhamu* dancers, walk on fire and bring to mind the ancient exploits of the *Savara*-s, the Saora tribes in the forest. The main dancer in the *Danda Nata* usually narrates a tale about Shiva as the prime source of *gyan* and *bhakti*.

It could be that the *Gajan* and *Charak* pujas of Bengal have distant similarities with the *Bhokta* and *Danda* dances. In East Bengal, those performing *Gajan* puja undertake fasts, perform elaborate rituals and worship Lord Shiva. The prime actor is known as *Maini* and he dances as Shiva while another dancer joins him as Gouri or Parvati. During the dance he wears a 'head' and this has some resemblance to the 'mask' of the Chhow of Seraikela and the mask used in the early years of the Chhow of Mayurbhanj. The main priest of the *Danda Nata* is called *Maniama*. This suggests a relationship with *Maini*.

There was a time when about twenty thousand *Bhokta*-s used to congregate during the *Danda Nata* ceremony in the Chandanswar village of Balasore district. The dance of *Chaiti Ghoda*, prevalent among the fishermen of the coastal districts, has also a similar ritualistic significance and symbolism, which may not be entirely unrelated to the cultural matrix underlying the Chhow performance. Besides, the worship of Bhairava during the *Chaitra Parva*, the traditional visit to the dance arena of the *Jatraghata* and *Nishagghata* perhaps point to the intricate connection between Shaiva and Shakta worship and the origins of the Chhow dance. Thus, before one can conclude that Chhow dance is primarily martial in origin and spirit, these various aspects of possible inter-relationships and inspiration have to be studied. That it has positive folk inspiration is beyond doubt. The tribal orientation is also extremely probable. The Santals and Bhumijias, if not the Mundaris and the Oraons, seem to have contributed, in no small measure, to its evolution. Similarly inspiration may perhaps have also been derived from the Shiva and Shakti cult. More light needs to be shed on these possible

relationships and the viewing of Chhow as an expression of the Spring Festival and its different manifestations before one can arrive at any possible final conclusion about its origin.

### A Composite of Various Elements

The vigour and fury of the movements in Mayurbhanj Chhow bring to mind the dynamism of Santali and Munda tribal dances. Besides there is the relationship to Shiva worship, to the concept of the *Tandava* dance, and to *Bhokta* rituals. What is worth noting is that even the delineation of more delicate emotions (like love) is through vigorous foot-work and massive expression of vitality. There is very little that is really feminine or tender in Chhow. Grace is always married to vigour and emotion to energy.

The item *Sabara-toka*, for instance, combines refinement and strength through the various movements of the dance. The *Sabara-toka* advances through the dense jungle with a majestic and elegant sweep; he hears the sound of an animal and jumps into action. His body becomes a dynamic instrument poised to kill and then there is the grace (which follows the killing of the animal) as he splashes water on his tired face! The entire sequence of movements delineates various moods and emotions. The dance item *Dandi* conveys a more austere mood since it portrays the young initiate symbolically leaving his house to perform severe penance and yogi practices. *Kailash Leela* is much more romantic in its conception and brings in the divine *maya* of the Supreme God through a series of rapidly shifting sequences.

Sabara-toka





*A scene from Dandi*

An item like *Tamudia Krishna*, for example, combines a subdued mood (embodied in the final scene when Krishna breaks Radha's pitcher) with the sheer violence and verve of the folk rhythm which informs the entire sequence. When Krishna dances in this number it is not just an emotive and

*A scene from Kailash Leela*



tender love-dance; the dance exudes, simultaneously, a sense of kinetic energy. The essence of manhood is vigorously asserted and even the flute is waved about in an almost furious manner. But this is not allowed to detract from the lyricism of the theme and its aesthetic grace. This particular dance-number (like other dance numbers in the tradition) achieves a fusion between the vitality, the lack of sophistication of the folk-style and the restraint of a formal dance. It is not so stylised as to be a mere form, a dessicated mask, a shadow without substance. Nor is it just raw energy or rhythm without discipline or organisation.



*A scene from Tamudia Krishna.*

#### *Need for Codification*

An aspect of this form which demands attention is the formal codification of the idiom and vocabulary of the dance and its synchronisation with the musical accompaniment (both instrumental and oral) wherever the latter happens to be present. Under royal patronage, Chhow definitely flourished as an eclectic art. Records prove that the Gurus used to be taken to watch the performances of not merely western ballet and ball-room dances, but also the dance of the Nolis of Puri. This willingness to be exposed to other dance forms was, however, accompanied by a very curious reluctance to codify the basic vocabulary and idiom of the dance. This built-in deficiency has continued to bedevil Chhow.

Critics have sought to divide the basic movements of the dance into six *topka*-s and thirty-six *ufli*-s, relating six *ufli*-s to each *topka* in the manner of the relationship between the *raga*-s and *ragini*-s. But this relationship has

yet to be formally described and adequately explained. The theme-content is derived from a large variety of subjects including the daily chores of the common man and the imitation of the movements of birds and animals. The snake-dance, the Garud in *Garud-bahan* and the deer-dance are cases in point. Curt Sachs, the noted authority on primitive dance, has observed that the essential significance of imitating the movements of animals lies in the primitive belief that those animals could be subjugated and conquered through such a portrayal. This interpretation has also gained support from several noted anthropologists. The basic postures and the *Bhangi-s*, the underlying *Dharan-s* and their aesthetic background have, therefore, to be examined in the context of the broad cultural matrix that informs it.

#### Lyrics and Music

Further, serious attempts have also to be made to compile the lyrics accompanying the dance numbers. It is a pity that even after years of performance there is, as yet, no comprehensive and definitive compilation of the different solo, duet and group dance-numbers or the lyrics which accompany them. These lyrics are largely derived from the *Jhoomar* and the local folk-songs. These have to be systematically codified so that the trainees perceive the delicate relationship between the meaning and significance of the lyric and its visual representation through the dance. The aesthetic appreciation of the lyric is an important item in the proper presentation of any dance and more particularly a folk dance. In the absence of such appreciation, the dance runs the risk of degeneration into a mechanical and routinised movement of the body.

These lyrics can be broadly divided into four groups. Some of them have a strong admixture of Bengali. The songs accompanying *Tamudia Krishna* and *Nisitha Milon* are of this nature. The song accompanying the dance item *Kirata Arjuna* is closer to Bhojpuri. There are also lyrics which are almost indistinguishable from modern Hindi. Fourthly, we have items where the accompanying songs (as in *Odia* and *Nithura Kalie*) are rendered in chaste or colloquial Oriya. Here are a few examples of the original songs (transcribed in the Oriya script) translated into English.

ବିଜ୍ଞାନରୁ ଗାଗରି କାତଖ  
ଗୁଣ୍ଡ ବରିଚ୍ଛନ୍ନ ପଥେ ପଥେ  
ସରମ ଭରମ କୁରୁ ଭୟ ଗୁଣ୍ଡ ଚିତ୍ତେ  
ହେ ସମ୍ପ୍ରମରୁ ଭଲ ଆନିତେ  
କି କହିବ କୋଥାୟୁ ପାବ  
ମା ହେବିଏ ଶ୍ରୀ ମାଧବ  
କୃତ ଗୁଣ ଘରୁ ବୁଝା  
ଆଜ୍ଞେ କଦମ ତଳେ  
ହେ ସମ୍ପ୍ରମ

*Embarrassed by her relatives and afraid of them,  
Rai (Radha) treads the path slowly  
With the golden water pot in her arms  
To fetch water from the river Yamuna.  
She does not see Srimadhava, wonders what she should do,  
Where she should go.  
He, who has snatched her away from her kula  
And ruined life in the family,  
Stands there under the kadam tree.*

(from *Tamudia Krishna*)

ଆଉ ନ କୁଲୁ ଶ୍ୟାମ ପୀରୁତିବେ  
ଥାଉଗ ପୁମପୁରୁ ଭାବୁଗବେ ।  
ପୁଟ ନୁଆଁଟ ଗୁରୁ ଶଠ ମହିମା ମେରୁ  
ଖଣ୍ଡୁ ଯୁ ପହି ନହିଁ ପରୁଗବେ । ଘୋଷା  
ଗୋପ ବ୍ରମଣୀ ମୋରା ଛୁଡ଼ିଗଲେ ମଥୁରା  
ଅସବଦ ପତକା ଗୋପେ ହେଉଛି ଟେକା  
ଡକା ବଜଇ ଶ୍ୟାମ ବିରୁଜିବେ ।

*Don't be misled any more  
By Shyama's overtures of love  
Ignore His sweet words.  
The guru of lecherous and wayward men  
He is the prince of traitors,  
In this wide world  
There is no robber equal to him.  
He deserted the women of Gopa.  
And left for Mathura.  
The flag of His misdeeds has been unfurled in Gopa,  
And what a monument to Shyama's accomplishments!*

(from *Nithura Kalie*)

ପାହାଡ଼ ପରବତ ପାମୁ ମୁର୍ଦ୍ଧା ଆକୁମ୍ଭଣ୍ଡ  
ଖାମୁବେ  
ଆରେ ଭେରୁ ବିସ୍ତୁରାଏ ସ୍ବପ୍ନବେ  
ତରୋ ତୁମା ଦିମ୍ବବେ । ଘୋଷା

*I would go across hills and mountains  
Eat the jungle fruit.  
I would sleep on your bed  
And shower you with kisses.*

(from *Kirata Arjuna*)

It is not possible to state with any accuracy when such lyrics came into the Chhow dance. Originally, Chhow was no doubt a form of non-verbal theatre. It is possible that during the 1920s and 30s, and particularly because of the association of the Chhotrai Sahebs and Routrai Sahebs of the Estate, a need was felt to introduce some song accompaniment. The lyrics, however, cannot be said to be either original or meaningful and their authorship is also far from certain. The dance numbers could as well do without them.

Luckily for Chhow, there has been an almost continuous tradition of very able dance teachers. Till now they have, however, depended far too much on individual inspiration and their own sense of improvisation. While any creative dance does depend on such improvisation to some extent, the need for consolidation and codification cannot be denied. Unfortunately, this is yet to begin in a systematic way. Those who play the instruments also need to be guided by a regular system of musical notation. The *Ranga Raja* is after all a form of orchestra, howsoever imperfect. It cannot do without a formal system of notation to guide the drummers and the Mahuri-players. In the absence of such a system, there is a genuine danger of too much of clever improvisation and of lack of symmetry between the dance as visual imagery and its auditory accompaniment. One also notices a gradual tendency to incorporate elements of lighter tunes through the Mahuri and the flute. Over the last decade, this tendency to introduce softer music, often an imitation of film tunes, has increased and is something that must be seriously discouraged and discarded. In brief, the dance items have to be studied as an integral system of *Nritta*, *Nritya* and *Natya*. Because of the large number of character-dances, an informal system of choreography cannot be avoided, but the dances require to be systematised.

#### *Decor and Costumes*

Not much attention has hitherto been given to the costumes worn for the dance numbers. The importance of costume designing in a folk dance form can hardly be over-emphasised. As early as July 1934, the poet Lakshmikanta Mahapatra (who visited the Chhow dance of that year at Baripada) regretted the tendency to lay too much emphasis on glittering dresses of artificial silk. What is required is thorough planning of the sets of each dance number. The costumes should necessarily be traditional, and must harmonise with the theme, the period to which it relates, and sound aesthetic concepts.

#### *Training and Encouragement*

The Mayurbhanj Chhow Nrutya Pratisthan has initiated a programme to attract regular trainees, and offered them stipends to learn the dance. In the absence of such encouragement in the past the learners used to be mainly part-time workers, such as plumbers, mechanics, and even rickshaw-pullers. Under those circumstances many of the trainees could hardly afford the time or energy for sustained and regular practice. Many of them used to brush up their knowledge and technique of the dance just two or three weeks before the Annual Festival.

Historically Chhow has passed through many phases of growth and decline. During the rule of Maharaja Krushna Chandra Bhanja Deo (1868-1882), Chhow dance enjoyed immense popularity and rich princely patronage. Inspired by the Maharaja's example, the then Chhotrai Saheb Brundaban Chandra Bhanja Deo assumed the responsibility of training and performance of *Uttar Sahi*. He himself used to take part in the dance. His brother Gokul Chandra Bhanja Deo was in charge of *Dakhin Sahi*. The main road running east-west from the palace divides Baripada town into *Uttar Sahi* and *Dakhin Sahi*. After Sriram Chandra Bhanja's investiture in 1892, his brothers Shyam Chandra Bhanja and Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo took charge of the performance of the *Uttar Sahi* and *Dakhin Sahi* respectively. These two brothers participated in the dance and arranged for an annual grant for each *Sahi*. The training continued throughout the year and new dance items were also introduced. One record suggests that an outlay of Rs. 800/- was always sanctioned for the introduction of a new dance item and included the cost of costumes and other accessories.

Chhow dance suffered a partial eclipse after the death of Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo in 1912. The annual grant for each *Sahi* was reduced and until the early thirties the dance languished. Then Maharaja Pratap Chandra Bhanja Deo increased the annual grant to Rs. 5,000/- for each *Sahi* and took a sustained interest in the form. Dancers received handsome rewards, including land grants. Teams of Ostads, dancers and committee members of each *Sahi* were often sent by the Maharaja to observe the performances of Uday Shankar, Amala Shankar and other exponents of Indian dance. This period witnessed the evolution of expertise and high technical standards and a revival of the dance. But in the wake of the merger of the princely States into Orissa (in 1949), there was a decline. Princely patronage was no longer available and the state government did not move in to fill the vacuum. Bhabani Kumar Das took it upon himself to keep alive this dance form with the help of Ostads and artistes and presented special shows before the first Governor-General of India Sri Rajgopalachari and Prime Minister Pandit Nehru. The Central Sangeet Natak Akademi and the State Akademi came to the rescue of the dance through suitable financial assistance. The present difficulty is to maintain sustained interest and regular practice, so urgently required for a proper performance. Chhow dance is by its very nature so vigorous that there is a danger of thinness in performance in case of a long gap in training. Many of these dancers and dance teachers have to depend on other avenues of employment; some are agriculturists by profession, others are small traders. But the majority do not have any settled and assured source of income. This makes it difficult for them to continue dance practice in a systematic manner. Assurance of a number of performances inside or outside the State can provide a substantial income to the dancers and the poorer among them can then give up other part-time activities and concentrate on the dance. This calls for organisation and efforts from all concerned. A systematic training scheme was drawn up during 1970-72. A stipend is now being offered to the trainees. The Sangeet Mahabidyalaya at Bhubaneswar has opened a course on Chhow and it has become extremely popular. Three teachers have been brought on loan from the Mayurbhanj Chhow Nrutya Pratisthan. It is hoped that with gradually ex-



panding popularity, Chhow can be performed in different parts of the country almost on a regular basis and this can generate sufficient funds for the dancers to devote themselves full-time to the art.

On the occasion of the Annual Festival in 1971 a four-day discussion and demonstration programme was organized, in addition to the usual dance performances at night. Dance troupes from the interior of the district were invited to compete. As many as ten teams participated, over and above the two main teams from Baripada proper, the *Dakhin Sahi* and *Uttar Sahi*. The items presented by the lesser known groups from the interior were an eye-opener. There were very promising dancers, who with regular training and the benefit of better *gurus* could grow into mature artistes. Also in evidence were certain charming variations in musical accompaniments, lyrics and costumes as also the entire approach to the dance. Some of these regional variations inside the district need to be encouraged. In particular, two items, *Garuda Bahana* and *Kalachakra*, presented by the *Jambani* and *Sansimulia* parties were considered to be of a very high order and given special prizes.

The future growth of Chhow lies in the direction of a systematic investigation into some of the areas of uncertainty mentioned above so that this very artistic and vigorous folk-art can gain the recognition which it so richly deserves. It is a pity that this dance has not yet been performed in different parts of the country in any significant way and unfortunately it has not attracted the attention of dance critics from different parts of India. The relationship of different aspects of the dance with similar dance forms in other parts of the country should be explored as also its links with the folk culture of the area. One has to ensure that this extremely vigorous and interesting dance form is not merely sustained; it must evolve and flower.

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## A Meeting with Miklós Jancsó

Kumar Shahani

It was a grey morning when the interpreter came to pick me up for a meeting with Miklós Jancsó. We drove through the Hungarian landscape with a soft light falling upon its mid-May greenery. Mr. Pal Papp of the Institute of Cultural Relations explained that the film on which Jancsó was working, was a mammoth production. It dealt with the life of an extremely right-wing man, who led by events that threatened Hungary's national integrity, undergoes a transformation and joins the revolutionary forces. It was based on fact, but the film was fictionalised. With a quiet gentleness, Mr. Papp, who had organised my stay in Budapest, suggested that there was great nervousness about the complicated production and hoped that I wouldn't find Jancsó too preoccupied. I could well imagine the situation, knowing the need for single-minded attention even while one directs a less spectacular film.

Moreover, Jancsó is under a multi-pronged attack. The official line, which I could glean from meetings with people of different functions, suggests that Jancsó seems to protest against all forms of control. Fascism, they assert quite rightly, is a historical and not a periodic phenomenon. Forms of oppression at different stages of history should not be equated with one another. It is possible to interpret Jancsó's work in a purely cyclic manner, if one does not take into account its inversion into openness. What is true of the inverses of finite and infinite spaces in his work, is also true of the circular-spiral equations in his narrative patterns.

It was particularly invigorating to discuss this issue with a woman critic who combined the fluffy roundedness of an Austro-Hungarian aristocratic portrait with the austere confidence of the socialist woman. A theatre critic, she also accused Jancsó of pornography in his Italian work. This is a charge which is repeated by critics and laymen alike. Having seen only his Hungarian films, I find this difficult to believe. His nudes have the brutal dignity of nature. Younger film-makers, apprehensive of Jancsó's formalism (see Zanussi's interview in the *Quarterly Journal of the National Centre for the Performing Arts*, Vol. V, No. 3), usually shrug off this accusation. The young are moving away from the stylised and allegorical framework towards naturalism, in perhaps a more mature form than the West European films sponsored by television. It is a naturalism which has at its base the same urgent desire to break through the controls that Jancsó's films have. It is a tendency which in Hungary was greatly refined by a full-length documentary made by a woman director, Judith Elek. Her film, *A Simple Story*, was a microscopic study of a Hungarian village and took five years to document. It has been difficult for her to make another film. But two films which are current successes with audiences and critics alike are both naturalistic (*The Film Novel* and *Gyuri*). The first tells a story through a documentary camera. The second photographs actual incidents and puts them together as a story with social comment. The need to assert a psychological

personal vision to document experience with immediacy makes young film-makers move away from Jancsó's film-ballets.

Yet, everyone unanimously agreed that I must meet Jancsó to discuss with him the epic structure. Two of the major problems, as I see them, after the cinematographic achievements in this direction, revolve around the separate questions of individuation and the positioning of myth. This, while retaining the scale and scope of history; of all that has passed concretely (*been thus*) and *is* in the world (see the *Mahabharata's* description of itself).

These are problems of content first and, therefore, the solution cannot be of a purely technical nature. They would need to be resolved in the truer terms of form, as experience and philosophy. Their resolution would not only terminate the seemingly endless cycle of naturalism/formalism/naturalism but probably bring Lukácsian aesthetics into a deeper understanding of the combinations of the lyric, the dramatic and the epic as practised by contemporary artistes. Jancsó and his colleagues could then wander into new pastures.

As we reached the location, all the signs of a Jancsó film came alive. The accents of red in the sashes and the feathers of caps, the olive uniforms, the blue-gray-black costumes, the white blouses of women, the off-white thatch which would saturate to a subtle yellow on film. The stark black-and-white contrasts of oblong barracks, against and around which the circular movements of people would hold up the banner and the ellipses of horses at infinity, now silently near and threatening. We walked through the slush and took up a position from which we could watch him rehearse. There was a light rain but the rehearsals went on uninterrupted. Each element of the complicated movements is added on. First, there are three distinct movements taking place simultaneously, then four; a fifth, the slow, stylised fall of a door, the sixth, the encircling of an angelic little girl who performs with the utmost ease. The silence required for the rehearsals is too oppressive for the scores of people waiting around, even for the geese and dogs that have to participate in the shooting. Jancsó and his cameraman are as unruffled as one would be if one were shooting with a single character. Jancsó has to make the movements of a symphony orchestra conductor but demands silence only once. He takes the shot. The very first combination of movements hasn't worked out. He goes up to the actress who holds the fluttering banner and the old man who is to embrace her. He comes back. There is a lull. He recognises my host and comes up towards us. We shake hands. He says it would be an hour before he could chat with us. It has stopped raining and the light has improved. It was here that he had shot *Silence & Cry*. They rehearse once again and are ready to shoot. After a couple of takes, he is satisfied. There is a great rush to set up the next shot. To my great surprise, the camera is taken off the light crane and set up on a tripod. It is very much brighter, although the light is still soft and only caresses the hair. Jancsó walks back to the previous camera position. A horseman rides up to him to tell him that he is a genius. There is general laughter as Jancsó tries to hide his embarrassment. He takes the next shot.

It is the embrace again. A shot of such a short length and a cut-away. It is impossible for him to use the shot, I feel. He comes towards us and, in a characteristic bird-like movement, he spreads out his two arms to place them on our shoulders as we walk. The interpreter gives up following us as Jancsó starts speaking directly to me, in French. He has been told what I am interested in and there isn't much time to lose.

K. S. : Tell me if this is true. There is a reversal of finite and infinite space in your films. It suits the content of your films admirably—the recurrent aspiration to the infinite and the oppressive finiteness of human society. . .

M. J. : (smiling broadly) Yes, this infinite space we discovered through the landscape of Hungary itself, my writer and I. We thought that no other country perhaps has such a flat landscape. From that, we worked to the relationship that you speak of. . .

K. S. : And the use of the plan-séquence in an enclosed space also does the same, by inversion. . .

M. J. : Yes, that's very true. But I'm beginning to change that. I may not use the plan-séquence as much. It becomes too abstract. And now I'm doing something—a trilogy—based on a historical fact; I want it to be more concrete. It is, of course, imaginary reality. Things didn't happen the same way as we will show them. But I don't want it to become too abstract. It's different on the stage, you know, when you arrange the *mise-en-scène*. Those real people are seen, felt by audience as real. But, on the screen it may all look and become *irréel*.

K. S. : All the same, I thought the plan-séquence and this finite—infinite inversion suited your theme of circular oppression.

M. J. : Yes, that's true, (he smiles and does not answer immediately), but all oppression is not the same. And if it becomes abstract in the film, it appears to be the same—one form of oppression and the other. I want to get away from that unreality. Moreover, so many other people are doing the same sort of taking now. In the beginning it was Angelopoulos, the Greek, and me. Now, with Angelopoulos, he needs it: the plan-séquence. Because, through it, the scene does not only refer to the present, but also begins to suggest the future. He uses it as a device for that—for making transitions of time. While I'm searching for the 'presence' of the theatre, to make the action come alive.

K. S. : But, isn't it true that you have to banish all life from the theatre to be able to say anything through it?

M. J. : That's what is contradictory. Exactly. In the theatre, you have live actors, you do away with life. In the cinema, you don't have live actors. But it is supposed to mimic reality . . . that's what we started

by questioning. Say, in a Western or in any of the traditional genres of the cinema, the spectators enter inside the scene, they participate by entering into the action. The illusion of reality is considered to be real itself. If you follow the *mise-en-scène* of the theatre, make it abstract, the abstraction becomes the reality. That's what I want to avoid now.



A still from *Round Up*.

K. S.: It becomes mythical (he nods vigorously and says, 'the theatre is mythical'). In your earlier films—*Cantata* and *My Way Home*—to avoid that, you had a non-triangular three-way basis of relationships and narrative. You had a structure which could perhaps be represented like this  $\wedge \vee \wedge$  (he nods in assent). From *Round Up* onwards, it seems like a spiral ('Yes, yes, that's how it is'). But, in *Elektra*, you ended on a myth... that is, you functioned with a closed relationship...

M. J.: *Elektra* is a myth. It is myth... how shall I say it?... a myth which is bitter. It is the hope for justice. For the resurrection of justice. I didn't want to stick to the original, naturally. It is very well-known and that would have been pointless. I wanted to convert the old myth into a new one. So, it ends on the myth of optimism. But the undercurrent is not optimistic; it is bitter.

K. S.: Do you believe that any two-way relationship, a dialectical relationship must end up by being mythical?

M. J.: That's why the theatre is mythical.  
I am a Marxist and I believe that the dialectical method is the only

one by which we can know the things of life, of reality. But I cannot subscribe to dogmatism.

I believe with our great thinker, Lukács, that we are still nowhere near our aspirations. The people should not be treated like children or shepherded around.

K. S.: Did you know Lukács well... I believe that he had seen some of your work?

M. J.: I didn't know him very well. And unfortunately, only in the last years of his life. Yes, he liked my work and had made certain declarations which we can arrange to send to you.

[It had become quite bright and there was even a hint of shadows. Jancsó was visibly restless.]

K. S.: Do you think that all ideologies, whether 'materialist' or 'spiritualist', lead to oppression?

M. J.: So far, yes. But one continues to work and hope and believe in a possibility, however unobtainable it may be... (he switched to Hungarian) ... I must get back to work, forgive me, (repeated this in French).

We shook hands and left. The landscape in the bright sunlight did not seem to be as enchanting. There was so much more to speak of; above all, the difficulties of individuation, after the giving up of motivational characterisation. There was the question of archetypes and their reversals... the women in the water (*apsara*-s), the women on horseback and on the shoulders of men. The placement of static myth in open-ended, free-flowing epic narrative. The simultaneous presence of brutality and innocence in nature. The contradiction of pornography and art. Perhaps, his Italian films, like his work in his own country, are seeking for that significant continuum that will destroy our oppressive language and the traps of totalitarianism which the artiste creates for himself and his audience.

Perhaps, his attempt is to trace that 'immanence of life' which Lukács found in the great epics. The totality of life resists any attempt to find a transcendental centre.

*International Rostrum of Composers, Paris, May 22-26, 1978*

Following last year's Rostrum, around 600 broadcasts of contemporary works were made. Tapes of compositions by Louis Andriessen (The Netherlands), Friedrich Cerha (Austria), Paavo Heininen (Finland), Rudolf Kelterborn (Switzerland) were broadcast in more than 20 countries. "Streichquartett" (String quartet) by the composer Manfred Trojahn, of the Federal Republic of Germany, was chosen as the outstanding work from 74 new compositions given audition at Unesco's headquarters.

Representatives of radio networks from 34 countries in five continents attended the 25th Rostrum, organized by the International Music Council and under the chairmanship of Swiss conductor Pierre Colombo, to choose modern works to present over their systems.

As well as the composition by Manfred Trojahn, the participants recommended:

- "Musica Domestica" for 18 string instruments, by Zbigniew Bujarski (Poland);
- "Three Atmospheres" for clarinet and orchestra, by Alain Louvier (France);
- "Concerto for piano and orchestra" by Ladislav Kubik (Czechoslovakia);
- "Pezzo Concertato No. 2" Op. 24, for zither and orchestra, by Attila Bozay (Hungary);
- "Proença" for full orchestra, mezzo-soprano and electric guitar, by John Buller (United Kingdom);
- "Remembrance Noise—Eska", seven songs to poems by Dezso Tandori, Op. 12, by György Kurtág (Hungary);
- "Per Archi" for string orchestra, by Jacqueline Fontyn (Belgium);
- "Del Jubilo del Core", chamber choir, by Robert Heppener (The Netherlands);
- "Die Kitschpostille" (A little mawkish oratorio) for solo voices, choir and orchestra, by Rainer Kunad (German Democratic Republic);
- "Trimorphism" for flute, violin and piano, by Kraudo Mori (Japan)

The Rostrum of Composers also recommended three works by young composers aged under 27: "Stratifications" for orchestra, by Hans Abrahamsen (Denmark); "Nearnesses", electronic music, by Ake Parmerud (Sweden); and "Music for five" by Nils Henrik Asheim (Norway).

To celebrate the 25th anniversary of the International Rostrum of Composers, a Round-Table discussion was organized at the end of the session on *Knowledge and Communication of Contemporary Music through the Mass Media—Importance of Repeated Broadcasts*.

*V. Shantaram Motion Picture Scientific Research and Cultural Foundation.*

The V. Shantaram Motion Picture Scientific Research and Cultural Foundation, which started functioning in May 1978, is funded by the vast assets of V. Shantaram in the form of his studios and equipment. V. Shantaram's objective in founding the Trust is to re-channel into the motion picture industry what he himself has gained and learnt from it in the course of his long and fruitful association with films. An advisory committee of eminent individuals in the cultural and scientific fields will help V. Shantaram to manage the functioning of the Trust.

The Trust's objectives include the conferring of awards on films with a strong thematic content and the encouragement of the children's film movement. It proposes to promote scientific research in cinematography, and investigate problems confronting the industry at all levels. It also plans to establish a full-fledged library of books and films; to conduct research on audience taste with a view to improving it; to hold workshops for technicians and creative personnel in films; and to provide assistance to needy individuals in the industry.

This ambitious project, the first of its kind, has received a warm welcome from various sections of the industry and the public.

*FIE Foundation's National Awards (1978).*

The FIE Foundation's National Awards (1978) for outstanding contribution to Engineering and the Humanities were announced in May. The Foundation was instituted in 1973 by the Fuel Instruments and Engineers, Pvt. Ltd. (Ichalkaranji), which is celebrating its Silver Jubilee this year.

In the Humanities section, the recipients this year include: M. B. Srinivasan, the noted film director of Madras, for his contribution to choral music; S. Karuppiach Achari, renowned for his mastery over the traditional art of *pratimalakshana*, and his achievement in designing and constructing the memorial to Swami Vivekananda at Kanyakumari.

Another recipient this year is Ambalal Sitari whose research on stringed instruments and innovations contributing to standardization in their quality has now won general recognition.



*B. S. Raja Iyengar*

The death of Raja Iyengar in Bangalore on the 5th of July removes from the Karnatic music scene a colourful personality, whose magnificent voice made him a popular figure on the concert platform and whose early disc recordings were heard in practically every home in the South in the thirties and the forties. Raja Iyengar was born in 1901 and had his musical training under Konanuru Venkatacharya, Shamrao and K. V. Srinivasa Iyengar. For many years he was the principal of the Sri Saraswati Sangeeta Nritya Kala Shala, Hassan, Mysore State.

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*Boris Yarustovski*

Prof. Boris Yarustovski who died on the 12th of July was a familiar figure in the Congresses and Seminars of the International Music Council (UNESCO) of which he was the Vice-President for many years. He was also the Vice-President of the Musicians International Mutual Aid Fund. In his own country he was a highly respected scholar and teacher whose wise counsel and organisational acumen were much sought after both by students and his colleagues. He brought to bear on the National Music Committee of the U.S.S.R. and on Soviet music as a whole—under the able and dynamic leadership of T. Khrennikov—the imprint of his quiet, gentle personality, and he played a significant role in making music an instrument of international understanding.

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*Aram Ilyich Khatchaturian*

Aram Ilyich Khatchaturian died on the 4th of May in Moscow. On the occasion of his 70th birthday (June 6, 1973) T. Khrennikov wrote,

"Aram Ilyich Khatchaturian is an artiste from the east. So were Avetic Isakyan, Komitas, Egishe Charents, Martiros Saryan. I am always struck by the concreteness, the bold relief of their images. Is it perhaps possible that this is the special feature of the theatrical quality of the artistic mode of thinking? Whatever it may be, as you watch or listen to their productions, you see and hear Armenia. If one has not visited Armenia, it is difficult to understand in full measure the creativity of Aram Ilyich, the flowering valleys and high mountainous air of his music.

... The main thing is that Khatchaturian generously opened his heart and lent his ears to the great artistic traditions of Europe and in the first instance to the artistic tradition of Russia with its ethical and moral heights. There is no doubt that it was the real environment, governing his creative life, which has been the decisive factor—his childhood and adolescence spent in Tbilisi, which from times immemorial has been famous for the international tradition in its musical life, his student life in Moscow, and his meeting, and building ties of friendship with outstanding musicians of the modern age, and in the first place with Russian composers like Prokofiev, Myaskovsky, Shebalin, Shostakovich and Kabalevsky.

... With the passage of time his own style developed and enriched itself. His brilliant violin concerto, the heights and the dramatic quality of his symphonies, the lovely melody of his incomparably bright ballet music; the live and theatrical note in the Lermontov 'Masquerade'—all these works have already become Soviet classics. And they have become classics because Khatchaturian never deviated from the goal which he set for himself".

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*Lacchu Maharaj*

On July 19, died Lacchu Maharaj, a fine exponent of Kathak dance, at his residence in Gulistan Colony, Lucknow.

Lacchu Maharaj was born on September 1, 1901, the son of Kalika Prasadji and the nephew of the great Bindadin Maharaj. He thus came of a distinguished line of musicians and dancers whose family tree can be traced back to several generations.



Kalika Prasadji had three sons whose names are synonymous with the great traditions of the Lucknow *gharana*—Acchan Maharaj, Lacchu Maharaj and Shambhoo Maharaj. They have all left the imprint of their minds and of their dancing on many young Kathak dancers, Birju Maharaj, the son of Acchan Maharaj, being the best known. Lacchu Maharaj was trained first by his father and later by his elder brother Acchan Maharaj and began to give public performances at the age of ten.

Lacchu Maharaj was the recipient of many honours for his contributions to the Dance. During the last years of his life, he concentrated on teaching and many fine Kathak dancers like Sitara Devi and Birju Maharaj have had the benefit of his advice and guidance.

## Book Reviews

A STUDY OF DATTILAM. A Treatise on the Sacred Music of Ancient India by Mukund Lath, Impex India, New Delhi, 1978, Rs. 150.00 or \$30.00 (*In English*).

Throughout the long history of its development, we see at work in Indian Music the universal principle of *Lakshana* (theory) following *Lakshya* (practice). The *Rkpratisakhya*, as well as the *Naradi* and other *shiksha*-s are some of the oldest musical treatises which specially deal with the rules governing the chanting of the Vedas and the music of the Samans. Among *Lakshana-kara*-s who followed the ancient writers and expounded music in general, Bharata, the author of the *Natya Shastra* (placed between 300 B.C. and 300 A.D.), stands out as a towering personality whose concepts exerted a profound and dynamic influence on the subsequent evolution of theory and practice. The next authority of equal importance was Sharngadeva who wrote the *Sangita Ratnakara* (13th century A.D.) which is encyclopaedic in its range and coverage. The two works between them encompassed the totality of Indian music as it existed in those times in all its variety and multiplicity of forms.

During the intervening period several works like the *Brhaddeshi* of Matanga (7th century A.D.) appeared. There are many references to ancient authorities in these treatises but many of them existed only in quotations. One such author was Dattila, who was held in respect by authors and commentators during a period stretching from the 7th to the 18th century A.D. But his work was not available till K. Sambasiva Sastri made what may be termed a sensational discovery of a manuscript of the *Dattilam* and published it in the Trivandrum Sanskrit Series in 1930.

It must be noted that in these works before Sharngadeva the musical system centred round the concept of *Jati*-s. These are referred to by presentday writers as scales or *that*-s but they were distinct melodic entities and not mere scales. By a modal shift of tonic, many scales equivalent to the well-known ones of the current systems may be obtained and these were known to ancient theoreticians and musicians. The musical framework, consisting of *shruti*-s, *svara*-s, *grama*-s, *murchana*-s, *jati*-s and *tala*-s, prevailed over the entire country. The South, it must not be forgotten, had the same system for practical purposes and as is evident from the *Silappadikaram* (circa 2nd century A.D.) the 22 *shruti*-s formed the basis of the tonal division of the octave into 12 units. And the rock-cut inscription (7th century A.D.) at Kudimiyamalai in Tamil Nadu gives *svara* arrangements according to the *grama* system. Sharngadeva himself wrote his great treatise in the court of Singhana, ruler of Deogiri (1210-1247 A.D.) in the Central region and this work, as is well-known, is of basic importance for subsequent Northern and Southern theorists. The two great commentaries on the *Sangita Ratnakara*, which are indispensable for the elucidation of the corpus of the music of those times, were by Simhabhupala (circa 1330 A.D.) and Kalli-

natha (circa 1450 A.D.), who belonged to Andhradesa and Vijayanagar respectively. The two musical systems of the North and the South began to acquire their distinctive features in the period following Sharngadeva as a result of historical circumstances and geographical factors but they were united by identical concepts in the fundamentals of theory, bearing out the basic unity underlying the diversity of Indian art and culture. It is against this background that the *Dattilam* should be considered, and briefly speaking, this work deals with the melodic and rhythmic aspects of the *Jati* system of music which was prevalent from the age of Bharata to the time of Abhinavagupta (10th century A.D.) approximately.

Dattila has a refreshing manner of stating his ideas; he is precise, lucid and pithy. His definitions are in the nature of aphorisms or *sutra*-s. The text is fragmentary in many places owing to the ravages of time, but is clear enough to convey his ideas. Dattila deals with the system known as *Gandharva* in the same way in which Bharata has done in Chapters 28 to 31 in the *Geyadhikara* of the *Natya Shastra*. There are certain divergences between the two authorities, in addition to the points of agreement, and it is in this field that Dr. Mukund Lath's publication acquires its significance. He brings to bear on his task an impressive equipment of technical information covering as it does many disciplines such as *tarka*, *vyakarana*, *mimamsa*, *alankara shastra* etc. and a firm grasp over methodology. In analysing controversial problems, where Dattila takes a viewpoint different from that of Bharata, Dr. Lath relies largely on the *Abhinava Bharati*, that brilliant commentary on the *Natya Shastra*, by Abhinavagupta.

The *Dattilam* is a short work of 244 1/2 verses consisting of two sections, one on *Svara* and the other on *Tala*, in relation to the *Jati* system. And this has led scholars like Dr. V. Raghavan, Swami Prajnanananda, Dr. Prem-lata Sharma and others to consider the text to be an abridgement of a longer treatise which, in their opinion, is likely to have contained other sections on instrumental music, dance and possibly drama, on the pattern of Bharata's *Natya Shastra*. Dr. Lath has sought to prove that the *Dattilam* in its present form is original and complete in itself as a treatise and the argument is sustained throughout the book with elaborate reasoning and a meticulous consideration of facts found in the original. He notes many areas of disagreement between Dattila and Bharata, not about basic forms and rules but regarding points of structural details and conceptual nuances (such as the relative significance of *shruti*-s and *svara*-s, the numbering of *murchana*-s, *kuta tana*-s and *alankara*-s, the rules about dropping of notes in the two *grama*-s in the formation of *tana*-s and so on). Dr. Lath analyses the connotations of the terms *Gandharva* and *Gana* in depth. He points out that *Gandharva*, consisting of *svara*-structures of the 18 *jati*-s and the *tala*-structures of the seven major *gitaka*-s, in addition to some minor ones like *panika*, was distinguished by the unique characteristic of being sacred and immutable in respect of *svara*, *pada* and *tala*, resulting in *adrshita* or spiritual benefit. On the other hand, *Gana* differed in all these respects and used forms like *grama raga*-s, *bhasha raga*-s, etc., included in theatrical music, without the sacred element of *Gandharva*. The gestures used in the *tala*-s of *Gandharva* music had also a ritualistic significance. The *Gandharva* form of music is surveyed in the light

of the literature which appeared after Dattila in the *Vayu*, *Brahmanda* and other Puranas, and the writings of Sharngadeva, Rana Kumbha of Mewar (15th century A.D.) and others. The use of the term *Marga* as synonymous with *Gandharva*, by Sharngadeva is criticised by Dr. Lath but it may be conceded that the connotations of technical terms often change in course of time as a result of the historical process. For instance, terms like *tana*, *alankara* and *varna* have, during the medieval and modern times, acquired new meanings in Hindustani and Karnatic music.

The translation and exposition of the complete text of the original work, forming the core of the study, are both marked by accuracy and a deep understanding of the problems discussed. The restoration of missing phrases, words or letters in the Sanskrit verses has been done in a judicious manner. The treatment of the topics *shruti*, *svara*, *grama*, *jati*, *varna*, *alankara* etc., in the section on *Svara* and of *kala*, *padabhaga*, *matra*, *gitaka*-s etc. in the section on *Tala* is closely reasoned and quite exhaustive. It is a fascinating area where the old concepts and practices seem to have a bearing on modern usages, as in the application of the 10 *lakshana*-s of *Jati*-s like *amsa* or the dominant note, *antaramarga* suggestive of the *chalan* of the *raga*-s of present times and the three *yati*-s (flow in tempo), *sama*, *srotogata* and *gopucchha*, which occur in Muttuswami Dikshitar's compositions with a slightly modified application. Again *kala*, a unit of time consisting of four unsounded beats and three sounded beats, indicated movements of the hands and palms, named *Avapa* etc. in *Gandharva*, and is believed to have lingered on till Abhinava's time and gone out of vogue when Sharngadeva came on the scene. But in Karnatic music, within living memory, *tala*-s using these actions are known to have been employed in *Pallavi*-s, with some modifications by veterans like Tiruvaiyar Subramania Iyer and Conjeevaram Nayana Pillai. All in all, the value of *Gandharva* and of the *Dattilam* and Bharata's *Natya Shastra* which deal with it would seem to lie in the basic concepts and techniques passed on by their authority as enlivening forces which activate and give a direction to modern Indian music in several vital respects.

The diagrams and charts of *murchana*, *grama*-s and beat structures of *tala*-s are useful for reference. The position of *nishada* in the *Shadja grama* diagram (page 10) is not correct; it should be shown against the next *shruti* below it.

In the Preface (page xiii), the author speaks of the "now extinct Sama", but elsewhere (page 110) he states, "Whatever little survives of sama singing is always unaccompanied by tala". The fact is that at least in some centres of South India the chanting of the Sama Veda is still maintained in the traditional style true to its form.

The Appendices on the date of the *Dattilam*, the meaning of *Nataka*, and the Drum in *Gandharva* are well-documented and informative. The Index has been prepared with considerable care. However, the presence of a large number of typographical errors is surprising in a volume with such an attractive get up.

A Study of Dattilam by Dr. Mukund Lath is by all counts an outstanding publication and a valuable addition to the literature on Indian Music.

—N. S. RAMACHANDRAN

LIBERTY AND LICENCE IN THE INDIAN CINEMA by Aruna Vasudev, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, 1978, Rs. 40.00 (*In English*).

What does one expect of a book with a title as titillating as this? A lively discussion of the tortuous history of the censorship of Hindi films, laced with spicy anecdotes? A hard-hitting expose of the bankruptcy of the policies of men and women who have wielded the scissors, their sterile moralising and disastrous results? All this and more, surely, especially when the account is by a young votary of the 'new' cinema, schooled in the discipline at Paris, and once apprenticed to Chabrol and Resnais, as the dust jacket so ecstatically proclaims.

Then prepare yourself for a most unpleasant shock. For Aruna Vasudev's book is a dry-as-dust compendium of extracts of reports and facts culled from dozens of official documents, film journals, newspapers and so on. Full marks for some painstaking research, which obviously impressed the University of Paris sufficiently to give the author a Ph.D. But why foist a dull litany like this on unsuspecting readers, after dressing it up so provocatively?

A typical example of the lack of purpose in the book is the chapter called "Zero For Conduct" which is about the government's interference with the film world during the emergency. But here, too, Aruna Vasudev is merely content to list various anecdotes—varying from arm-twisting to blatant favouritism—all of which are still fresh in one's memory. Thus the passing, with a few minor cuts and a changed ending, of *Sholay* after the Chairman of the Censor Board had referred it to the government because of its gratuitous violence (which specifically contravened official policy at the time) is dismissed as arbitrary. Later, she does make some amends by pointing to the "special arrangement" that G. P. Sippy had with V. C. Shukla, the Information and Broadcasting Minister, but doesn't draw the obvious conclusion that the government was keen to enlist the cooperation of pliant producers in its propaganda campaign and this was one easy way to obtain it.

If there is anything at all of merit in this book, it is the odd reference, like the fact the Calcutta Board in the 1920's being instructed to snip off "anything that might show the white man in a bad light, (or) scenes of western women in any contact with 'Oriental men'" (p. 22). Such snippets, unfortunately, fail to relieve its monotony.

—DARRYL D'MONTE

NALACHARITHAM by Unnayi Varyar. Translated into English by V. Subramania Iyer and published by the Kerala Sahitya Akademi, Trichur, 1977, Rs. 15.00.

The bulk of medieval Malayalam literature owes its allegiance to the various histrionic arts prevalent in Kerala. Chakyar Koothu has given rise to the composition of many *Chambu Kavya*-s; the art of Tullal to the immortal *Tullal* poems of Kunchan Nambyar and Kathakali to *Attakkatha* literature. More than a thousand *Attakkatha*-s are known to have been composed during the past three centuries, but out of these hardly a dozen can claim any literary excellence. The rest are mere literary forms which help artistes to present stories in mime. It may again be said to the credit of the art of Kathakali that the greatest literary work in Malayalam known till today is an *Attakkatha* viz. *Nalacharitham Kathakali* or *Attakkatha* by Unnayi Varyar. He lived in the middle of the eighteenth century and stands out as a unique personality in the galaxy of Kerala's literature. *Nalacharitham Attakkatha* is often called the *Abhijnana Shakuntalam* of Malayalam, which suggests that the work shares some of the literary qualities of Kalidasa's immortal drama.

Before recounting the merits of this *Attakkatha*, let us consider the form of this literary genre. Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda* had its admirers in Kerala as early as the sixteenth century, if not still earlier. The Zamorine of Kozhikode, a royal poet, was so fascinated by the *Gita Govinda* that he composed the story of Krishna in the same style. *Krishna Giti*, an excellent imitation of *Gita Govinda*, both in poetic style and literary form, was composed with a view to presenting the Krishna saga on the stage in the form of a dance-drama, known as Krishnattam. *Shloka*-s, written in Sanskrit metres, narrate the story and the dialogue is in songs, *pada*-s as they are technically known. Another royal poet, belonging to South Kerala, composed a work called *Ramanattam* in the same style, but with a difference: some of the *shloka*-s and all the *pada*-s were in Malayalam. *Ramanattam*, depicting the story of Rama, is the forerunner of the art of Kathakali and its literature. It was the privilege of a third royal poet, the Prince of Kottayam, to compose a somewhat perfected form of Kathakali literature based on stories of the *Mahabharata*.

As soon as the art of Kathakali became the most popular literary medium, writers in Kerala turned their attention to this form as a medium for expression. This accounts for the innumerable compositions in this branch. And, as has already been pointed out, *Nalacharitham* has excellent dramatic potential. In the ancient and medieval literary works in Indian regional languages, characterization was a rare phenomenon. These works present almost all the readymade Pauranic characters but seldom does the genius of a writer exert itself to recreate them. But here we encounter an exception. Any character in this play, be it a dominant one or otherwise, leaves an indelible impression in the minds of readers or spectators. Though mythological in origin and stature, the characters behave like ordinary people around us and thus the work presents a dynamic picture of various cross-sections of a living society. As a musical play, it excels all the great

musical compositions of the day, and even today people sing and enjoy the songs of the play.

The attempt to render such a unique literary production into an international language, like English, is really laudable. The translator of this work seems to have been prompted by the idea of interpreting the genius of a Malayalam poet to non-Malayalam readers. But such noble intentions and enterprises often end in tragic failures, and the work under consideration is no exception.

Whatever be the aim of the translator in undertaking such a work, the very mode of his handling it has met with utter failure. He seems to have been guided by the wrong notion that unless he provided the names of the *raga*-s and *tala*-s of each song in the original, readers in English would have no idea whatsoever of the original pattern of the play. In a translation of a work of this kind, a detailed note in the introduction regarding its technical pattern would have served the purpose better. If the author's intention was to help an English-knowing non-Malayali to enjoy the performance with the aid of a handbook of this kind, then he is sufficiently justified in giving a literal rendering of the play as has been done here. Even so, one is somewhat sceptical about its relevance, unless, of course, the non-Malayali spectator is really keen to understand the details of the musical aspect of the play.

This is only a negligible flaw compared to the unimaginative and unpardonable atrocities committed by the translator throughout the work. The very first stanza as rendered by him reads thus:

"In days of yore, in the heaven-like land of Nishadha, spreading pure fame everywhere, just, beautiful like the god of love, shone the world-hero, King Nala, the son of Veerasena".

A rendering, more faithful to the original, is suggested below:

"There lived long ago  
in the heaven-like country Nishadha,  
a just king, handsome as Cupid,  
with glories immaculate,  
Nala by name, son of Veerasena".

I would not like to claim that the second one is a perfect rendering: but care has been taken to prefer the term 'handsome' to 'beautiful' in a context where the epithet refers to a male.

When the swan-messenger describes the enchanting figure and the noble character of Damayanti, the poet uses, with utmost discretion and a sense of propriety, a few epithets, pregnant with suggestive meaning. The poet says that the princess is *kamini*, *rupini*, *shilavatimani*, *hemamodasama*. The translator, oblivious to the significance of the word *kamini*, begins his

rendering thus: "Desired by all, beautiful, the best among the pure-minded ladies, like gold if only it had a perfume also. . ."

Yet another song rendered in English commences thus: "Talk, talk about Nala's good qualities. . ." Any one with a rudimentary knowledge of the usage of simple words like 'talk' would certainly refrain from using it in this sense. To be more faithful to the original it should have been rendered thus: "Pray, relate to me the virtues of Nala, one by one"

It is rather unfortunate that this publication, sponsored by the Kerala Sahitya Akademi, which has a galaxy of scholars on its advisory board and executive council, should have been brought out as it is, without being thoroughly scrutinized and revised. The Akademi, which should have maintained the status of the language and its literature, certainly owes us an explanation for this gross error.

—S. K. NAYAR

ASTONISH US IN THE MORNING. *Tyrone Guthrie Remembered*. Edited by Alfred Rossi, Hutchinson, London, 1977, £7.95 (*In English*).

DEAR ME by Peter Ustinov, Heinemann, London, 1977, £5.90 (*In English*).

This is an astoundingly complete book about an astounding man of the theatre. Tyrone Guthrie, whose shadow stretches across four continents (but mainly over such remarkable stages as London's Old Vic and the National Theatre, Stratford Ontario, and Minneapolis-Minnesota in the U.S.), was literally a towering figure: he was over six feet and four inches in height and a director endowed with a rare blend of dynamism and insight, qualities with which Peter Hall and Peter Brook are identified in our own times.

I was lucky to see Guthrie's productions at the Old Vic in the early fifties: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*. On the final night of the former play, he appeared on the stage for a discussion with young members of the audience. That was when I saw him. *Tamburlaine* had the sweep and colour typical of Guthrie's approach to theatre and, fortunately, I saw it before its leading actor Donald Wolfit quarrelled with the director and left midway during the run.

Guthrie also appears with Charles Laughton, Vivien Leigh and Rex Harrison—all actors who had worked in his productions—in a charming pre-war film called *St. Martin's Lane*; it is about the London theatre world symbolised by the name of that locality.



Rossi, who has edited this book, worked under Guthrie at Minneapolis. His portrait of Guthrie, the charismatic individual and the theatrical giant, is pieced together through "conversations" with a number of artistes, colleagues and friends who were associated with Guthrie. Tyrone was a terror to some but he was benevolent to others; he was always perceptive, full of tact and, of course, had his sharp edges.

It is thrilling to read these candid memoirs recorded by such eminent theatre personalities as John Gielgud, Laurence Olivier, Alec Guinness and Sybil Thorndike, to name only a few. No conventional biography could have been more definitive or more readable.

\* \* \* \*

Peter Ustinov is nothing if not a definitive example of versatility: stage and film actor-director, playwright, raconteur and many other related things. If he has missed being bracketed with first-rank geniuses (for instance, Orson Welles, who is also incredibly versatile), it can hardly be through any fault of his own.

His autobiography not only provides much hitherto unknown information about his life and career but, with its peculiar stylistic format, also enables us to penetrate the customary buffoonery of an alleged extrovert. Of mixed European parentage, Ustinov grew up in England only to find himself a misfit at public school. As a young and struggling actor, he was part of the generation that was redeemed by the trauma of the Second World War.

Uniquely, it was Ustinov who applied his barbed wit and sense of the ludicrous to the task of satirising contemporary European society in play after play. In 1951, this reviewer saw him in his production of *The Love of Four Colonels*. Here, too, he gave his usual bravura performance, switching from colonel to colonel.

Ustinov's other plays revert to the theme of inequity, political barbarism and the general muddleheadedness of those who pretend to guide humanity. He makes ample use of spoof and he liberates the form of drama from constrictions which had somehow been immaterial to his forbears in stage satire.

But Ustinov's tryst with genius occurred in films. *Billy Budd*, based on the Melville classic and directed by him, is a masterpiece which blends the spoken word marvellously with its innate antithesis: the eloquent image.

Not only the author's admirers but those curious about the traditionally colourful experiences of eminent creative artistes will lap up every word of this autobiography.

— DNYANESHWAR NADKARNI

*Chhayanat*, a Hindi quarterly of the performing arts, published by the Uttar Pradesh Sangeet Natak Akademi, Lucknow (Rs. 3.00 per issue).

*Natarang*, a Hindi theatre quarterly, edited by Nemichandra Jain, Delhi (Rs. 4.00 per issue).

*Lok Sanskriti*, a monthly in Hindi devoted to the folk culture of Rajasthan, Borunda (Rs. 1.50 per issue).

*Gagananchal*, a Hindi quarterly published by the Bharatiya Sanskritik Sambandha Parishad (an autonomous body under the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India), New Delhi (Rs. 3.00 per issue).

*Chhayanat*, *Natarang*, *Lok Sanskriti* and *Gagananchal* make an interesting collection and offer a glimpse into the cultural scene in Hindi. Except for *Gagananchal*, the rest are primarily concerned with the performing arts.

*Chhayanat* is edited by Dr. Suresh Awasthi and Naresh Saksena. The July-December number is really impressive, with many informative and readable articles. The coverage of a seminar on "The Problems of Criticism of Audio-visual Arts" is extensive and one comes across some very sound, though not always very original, observations. Of particular interest are the contributions of Dr. Suresh Awasthi, Mudrarakshasa, Dr. Laxminarayan Lal and Shashank Bahuguna. Mudrarakshasa's article (dealing with the plight of playwrights in the hands of directors) is rather pedestrian and does not go beyond saying the obvious. It betrays his irritation but no understanding of the changing patterns in the theatre. Dr. Bhanu Mehata's article on Aga Hashra and *Natyasangeet* has interesting information, fully substantiated with documentary evidence, and throws light on the contribution of a neglected but important theatre personality of the late twenties. Prayag Shukla's article on the parallel cinema is yet another amateurish attempt at analysing a 'phenomenon' which, in fact, hardly exists. Shukla gives the impression that this kind of cinema has 'arrived' in the work of Shyam Benegal. The conclusion speaks for itself. Rajani Shrivastava's article on instrumental (to be precise, sitar) music in relation to vocal music has a limited appeal due to the technicality of its subject, but then a wider appeal is not its goal either. *Chehare Chehare Kiske Chehare*, a full-length play, by Giriraj Kishore is mediocre and so is Bansi Kaul's analysis of the director's approach to a script. The obituaries of Kesarbai Kerkar and Uday Shankar take one back to a bygone era and their tone is 'appropriately' emotional, with no attempt whatsoever to assess the contributions of these artistes to their respective disciplines. A bibliography of plays produced in Lucknow from 5.2.77 to 30.9.77 is bound to be of great help to research scholars but the average reader might consider it sheer waste of paper.

*Natarang* has devoted its issue No. 29 to children's theatre. It contains three plays for children written by Vijay Tendulkar, Ratnakar Matkari and Rekha Jain. Among the contributors are Bansi Kaul, Paramanand Shri-

vastava, Naranarayan. Rai, Sushama Seth, Pratibha Matkari; their articles shed light on various aspects of children's theatre in India. This is an important issue, particularly for those who want to acquaint themselves with children's theatre activity in this country. The long bibliography of Hindi plays for children, printed at the end, will be useful to those in search of new scripts.

*Natarang* (No. 30) contains some very important articles. It impresses the reader by the sheer variety of topics covered in several articles. Jayadeva Taneja's article discusses the playwright Surendra Verma as an interpreter of sex. There is no doubt that the contributor's intentions are serious enough, but he lacks perception: he is satisfied with what Verma has to say, is happy to explain rather than interpret its import. Goverdhan Panchal's defence of Bharata's stage and tradition and his wistful hopes for its revival illustrate a scholarly approach tinged with nostalgia. He fails to demonstrate its relevance to the demands of the modern theatre. The most interesting article of all is that of Dr. Adnyata. He writes about *Dhanushayajna*, originally an off-shoot of the Ramleela, but now an independent and fully evolved folk form, mainly to be found near Kanpur and shaped by Pandit Pratapnarayan Mishra and Rai Deviprasad 'Poorna'. The book reviews rise far above the usual journalistic approach and are soundly critical.

*Chhayanat* and *Natarang* make fruitful reading because of their solid and unpretentious approach. If one misses scholarship in them, it is more a reflection of the intellectual climate in our country and the editors are hardly responsible for it.

*Lok Sanskriti*, edited by Komal Kothari and Vijaydan Detha and published by Rupayan Sansthan in the village of Borunda, in Rajasthan, is dedicated to all aspects of folk culture. The last few numbers contain an extensive list of proverbs. Unfortunately the proverbs are not accompanied by critical comment or explanations and, therefore, can hardly be understood by those who are unacquainted with the dialect.

*Gagananchal* stands apart from these three magazines: it has set itself the goal of "spreading the eternal message of Bharat to the world in our own language, Hindi". The articles can only be described as complacent tributes to our glorious past and traditions. Delving deep into the past can be relevant only if you can reach untouched and recondite areas of human experience and relate them to contemporary thought. But almost all the contributors sadly fail on this count. The list of the contributors is impressive: Atal Bihari Bajpai, Lokesh Chandra, Kapila Vatsyayan, Ramkinkar Upadhyaya to name a few. Except for Dr. Vatsyayan's contribution, the rest communicate the musty smell of old and yellowed books forgotten in the attic.

— MAHESH ELKUNCHWAR

CHANGUNA (an adaptation of Lorca's *Yerma* into Marathi) by Arati Hawaldar, Mouj Prakashan, Bombay, 1975, Rs. 5.00 (*In Marathi*).

KHOTA NATAK by Vrindavan Dandawate, Mouj Prakashan, Bombay, 1975, Rs. 9.00 (*In Marathi*).

There is a rich tradition of adaptations in the Marathi theatre. It began with adaptations of Sanskrit and Shakespearean plays in the last quarter of the 19th century, and is being extended today by adaptations of plays by such avant-garde European dramatists as Beckett, Ionesco, Durrenmatt and Max Frisch. The Annual State Drama competition has given a new stimulus to this tradition because it is often assumed that a 'new' play is a necessary ingredient of the recipe for success in the competition. But the adaptations presented in the competition are often far from competent and hence they are rarely published. *Changuna*, an adaptation of Lorca's *Yerma*, appears to be an exception.

The theme of a frustrated instinct for motherhood runs through much of what Lorca wrote. Man is fated to possess both fertility and sterility (which, for Lorca, seem to symbolise the forces of life and death) and a conflict between the two leads to tragedy. *Yerma* literally means 'barren' and it is also the name of the central character in this, one of Lorca's most poetic plays.

I do not know whether Lorca employed (in *Yerma*) standard Spanish or a dialect of Spanish used by the shepherds. The major characters in the play have a shepherd background and the action takes place against the backdrop of life in a village. A dialect, therefore, seems to be appropriate for the dialogue in this play. The English translation (by James Graham-Lujan and Richard O'Connell), however, has rendered the dialogue into standard English. An important aspect of *Changuna* is its rendering of the dialogue in a dialect of Marathi spoken in the districts of Kolhapur, Sangli and Satara. Consequently, the characters come alive and seem to integrate themselves with the locale. The songs have been rendered into Marathi by Anand Yadav who employs the same dialect in his original writings. The Marathi songs have been patterned on various forms of Marathi folk-songs. Arati Hawaldar makes brilliant use of the natural tendency of any dialect to use metaphorical expression and musical phrases; she achieves poetic effect through the rhythm, repetition, assonance, and rhymes, employed even in the prose passages.

Another important departure from the original is the change in *Yerma*'s family background. Lorca's *Yerma* belongs to the shepherd community, but Arati Hawaldar's *Changuna* is a farmer's wife. In her preface, she sets forth the reasons for this change: *Yerma*'s family needs to be slightly prosperous for the situation to have some credibility and the shepherds in Maharashtra are invariably poverty-stricken.

Other departures from the original are the result of differences in the religious and cultural background. But what is important is that *Changuna* retains much of the tragic intensity and poetry of *Yerma*.

The lack of relevant information (in this otherwise excellent book) on Lorca, his writings and particularly on the history of the publication of *Yerma* is a matter of some regret. It appears that there was a slight departure in the third act (of the performance) from the actual text. Clarification on this point would have been welcome.

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This is a collection of one short and two not-so-short plays. The title-play was first published in 1970 and the other two in 1973. They may be best described as avant-garde. The avant-garde movement in the Marathi theatre is in the process of developing self-awareness and the two essays, appended to the collection, may be regarded as representative of that process.

The tradition of Marathi drama is basically literary. Dandawate makes a conscious effort to break away from this stream. In addition to dialogue, he makes use of humming, shouts, cries, set phrases, incantation, nursery rhymes, repetitions, and other sound effects as part of the dramatic idiom of these plays. The intention seems to be to project basic patterns of human existence through forms abstracted from contemporary life.

In *Khota Natak*, the title-play, Dandawate makes brilliant use of a series of children's games to give concrete shape to the vague feelings of dehumanization, terror and loss of identity in the minds of the citizens of a metropolitan city. He articulates his theme through two poems which are presented on the stage in an incantatory tone by one of the nameless characters.

*Rajacha Khel*, the second of the plays, is an instance of an elaborate framework of play-within-a-play. The arena stage on which the play is intended to be performed (perhaps the first of its kind in Marathi) is supposed to represent a circus ring. At the outset, the ringmaster announces that they are going to present the performance of a 'real' king instead of the usual animal show. The king's show consists of a series of scenes from his own life. Except for the king and the ringmaster, all the other parts are played by circus clowns who are detached enough to make chorus-like comments on the show while playing roles in it. The relationship between the king and his subjects is very complex and seems to symbolize the whole gamut of relationships between rulers and the ruled, right from anarchy to democracy. Though skilfully written (the circus and the *tamasha* seem to have been intermingled through the clowns), the play, one feels, chokes under its heavy and elaborate framework.

Dandawate seems to be preoccupied by the concept of the theatre as 'a collective game', and this is reflected in the titles of these two plays and the techniques that he adopts. *Bootpolish*, the third play, is also based on the same concept. It deals with the life of shoe-shine boys. To get away from their orphaned life they play at being members of a conventional middle-class family. A beggar-woman takes the stage at the end of the play and

tells the audience that she was a film star once and had taught the shoe-shine boys to dream so that they might endure.

It appears, on the whole, that the plays present many brilliantly conceived scenes but, unfortunately, they do not quite cohere. They offer glimpses of their author's talent and hold promise of future achievement.

Dandawate's essay, prefaced to the collection, was first presented at a seminar held in Bombay on the Marathi Amateur Theatre. What he says often seems irrelevant in the context of this collection though there is a freshness and a note of strong conviction in the ideas which he sets forth. In her epilogue, Durga Bhagwat warns against the dangers inherent in presenting elements and forms of the folk theatre in sophisticated drama and treating them merely as an innovation or as a commercial proposition.

One fails to understand, however, why no mention has been made of the fact that these plays were produced by experimental theatre groups.

— P. N. PARANJPE

PANDIT HARIPRASAD CHAURASIA (Flute): Thumriyan Vol. II. Side One: Thumri Khamaj, *Tala* Roopak; Thumri Pilu, *Tala* Dadra. Side Two: Thumri Pahadi, *Tala* Kaharwa; Thumri Bhairavi, *Tala* Roopak. HMV ECSD 2781 (Stereo).

USTAD ALI AKBAR KHAN (Sarod). Side One: *Raga* Malayalam — *Alap*. Side Two: *Raga* Malayalam — *Gat: Vilambit* and *Drut* in Tritala. HMV ECSD 2548 (Stereo).

PANDIT BHIMSEN JOSHI (Vocal): Abhangvani (Marathi). HMV ECSD 2793 (Stereo).

Of the three records reviewed here, Hariprasad Chaurasia's disc is a bouquet of four *thumri*-s on flute (Khamaj, Pilu, Pahadi, Bhairavi). All these bear testimony to his poise, his control over blowing and fingering, as well as to a musical sensibility that succeeds in eliminating instrumental frills. With the Swaramandal tending to add to the tonal colour, one feels that the *teep-tabla* almost contradicts it by its own wooden timbre. One is also nettled by the choice of a *tala* like Roopak (with its short span) instead of Deepchandi. This is a clearly limiting factor to the artiste's own expansive and unhurried approach. Pahadi is notable for the closest approximation to tunefulness and imaginative interpretation. Nizamuddin is evenly efficient and especially in the *dugun*-s.

Ustad Ali Akbar's long-playing recording of his own creation, Malayalam, is successful as an example of his craftsmanship, but the *raga* does not emerge as a very distinctive entity. It appears only as a 'change-the-stress' variety of Nat-bhairav. Ustad Ali Akbar has his idiom and virtuosity at his command but this seems to tie him down; paradoxically it is mainly due to artistes like him that Indian instrumental music has been liberated in modern times.

*Abhanga*, as a devotional composition, is a marginal vocal form in Maharashtra. It can be regularly included in a classical musician's repertoire and also forms the main expressive channel for traditional *bhajan*-singers. When a vocalist like Pandit Bhimsen Joshi turns to *abhang*-singing, he presents a processed version of the traditional form. The *tala*-s, the texts, the accompanying instruments and the tunes — all have a pronounced classical bias. *Maza bhava* and *Sukhache he nama* have even flute pieces as opening music and *Kaya hi Pandhari* has sitars!

Pandit Bhimsen Joshi has a kind of fervour and a quality of voice which thrills one's ears. But the deviation from the traditional idiom and moulds sounds on occasions quite incongruous. If one decides to view these efforts as classical music that takes off from the traditional, devotional texts, then the renderings can be regarded as more acceptable. And if these are the tests one chooses to adopt, *Kaya hi Pandhari* and *Dnyaniyancha Raja* might prove satisfying.

— ASHOK RANADE



SOME FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The following numbers of the Quarterly Journal are out of print: Vol. I, No. 2 (December 1972); Vol. II, Nos. 1, 2 & 3 (March, June and September 1973); Vol. III, No. 3 (September 1974) and Vol. VI, No. 2 (June 1977). Since there is a growing demand for a complete set of the Journal from important educational and cultural institutions here and abroad, we request those of our subscribers and members who do not intend to maintain a file of all the back issues to return their copies of the above-mentioned numbers to us. We will be happy to purchase them for Rs. 7.50 a copy.

—Editor.

| <i>Programme</i>              | <i>Date</i> | <i>Venue</i>               |
|-------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Groupe de l'Opera de Paris | 26/09/78    | Homi Bhabha Auditorium     |
| 2. INTERNATIONAL MUSIC DAY    |             |                            |
| Amjad Ali Khan (Sarod)        | 01/10/78    | Bhulabhai Desai Auditorium |
| 3. TARUN ROY'S THEATRE CENTRE |             |                            |
| Athacha Sanjukta              | 26/10/78    | Tejpal Auditorium          |
| Parajita Nayak                | 27/10/78    | Tejpal Auditorium          |